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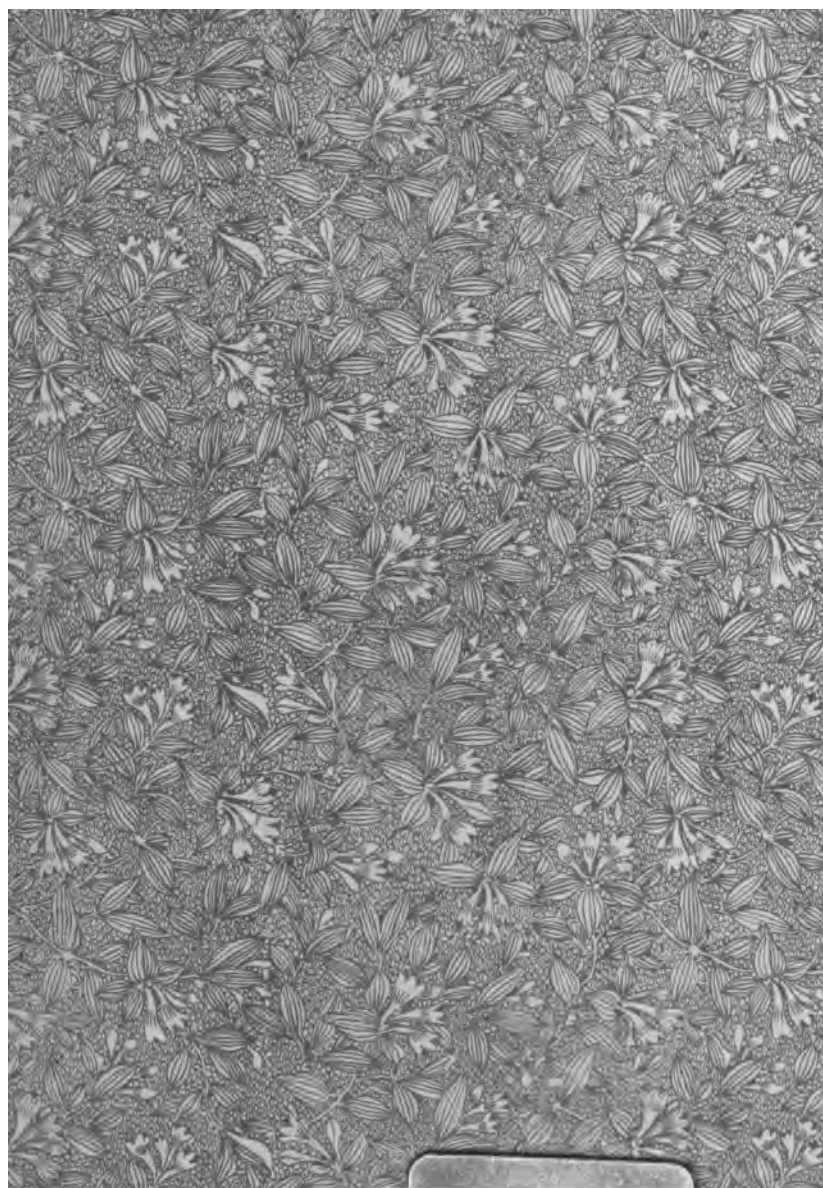
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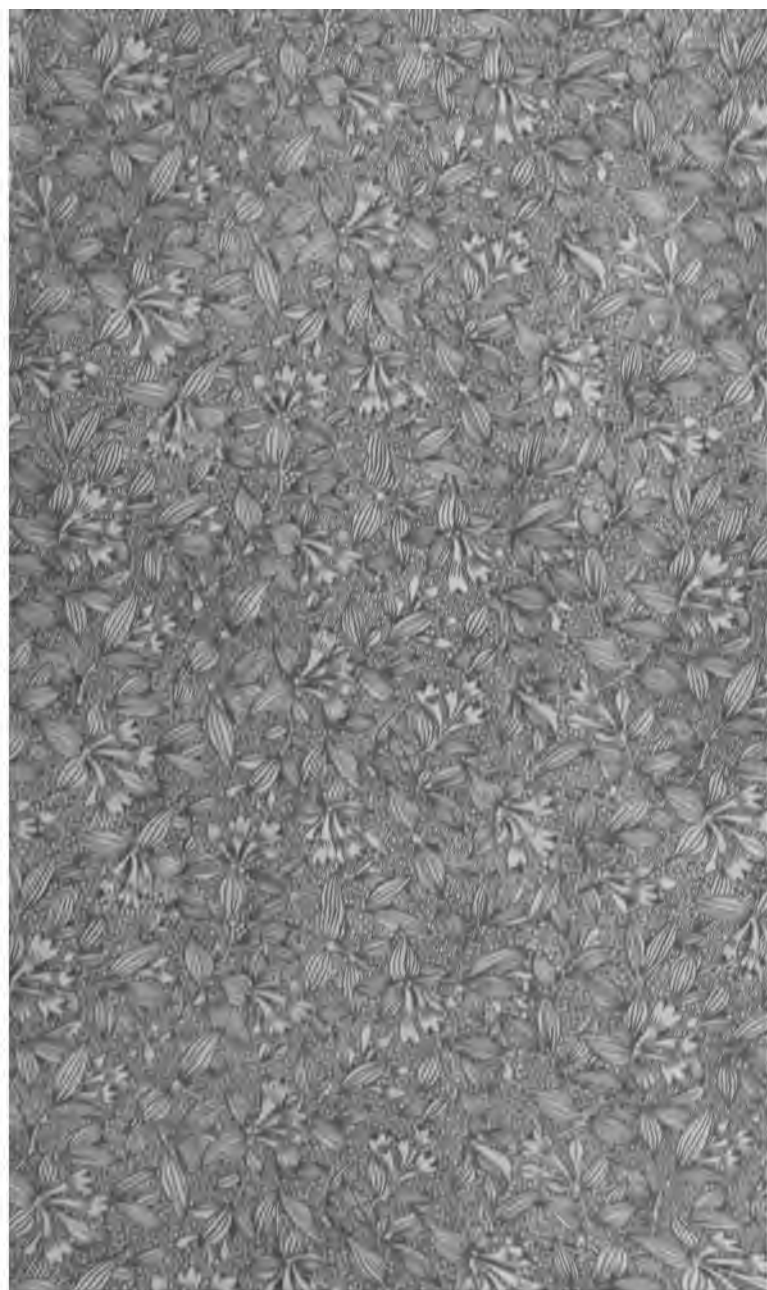
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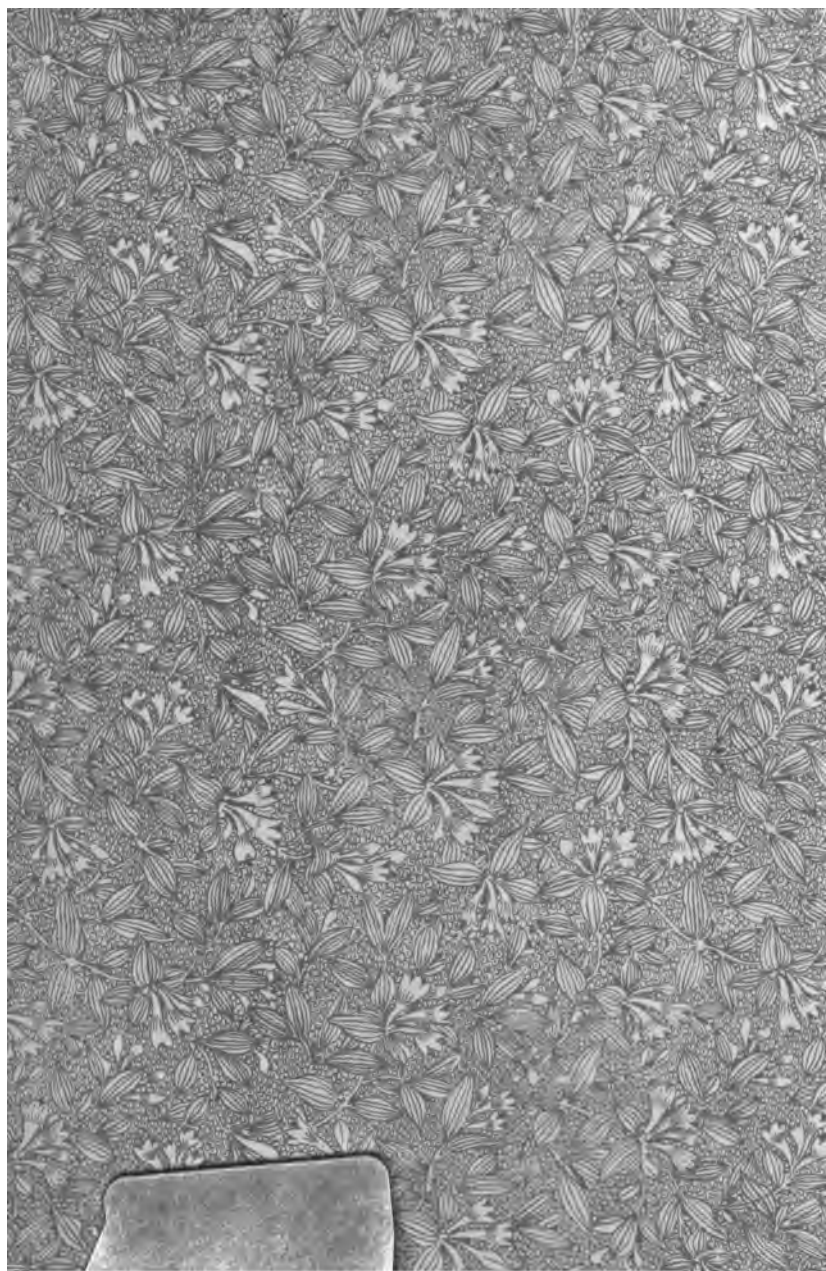
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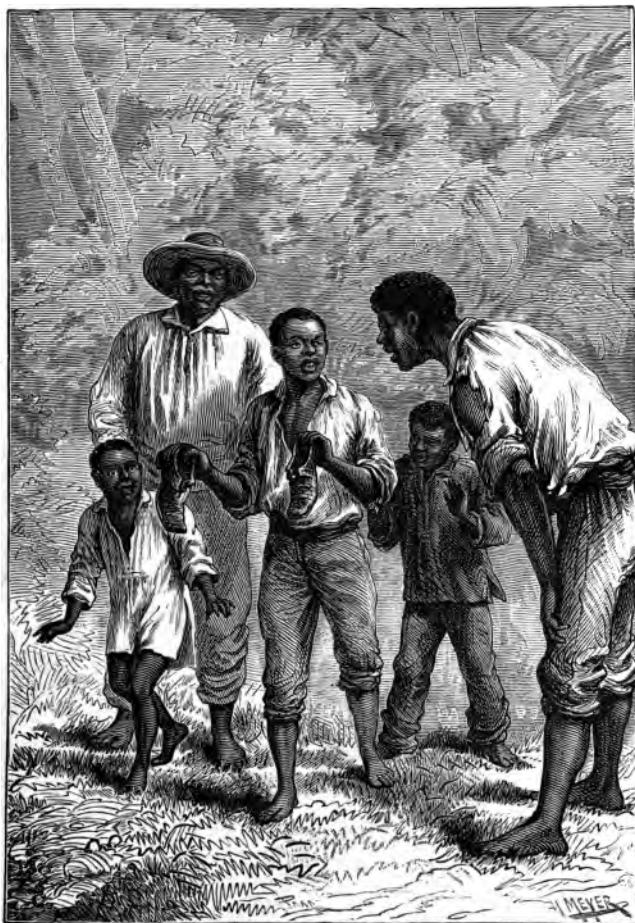








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"Coming up the hill, amidst the palms and plantains, were four negroes. There was a fifth, standing looking, with open-mouthed amaze."—Page 33.

"GROWING UP;"

A STORY OF GIRLS

WHICH

BOYS MAY READ.

BY

JENNETT HUMPHREYS.



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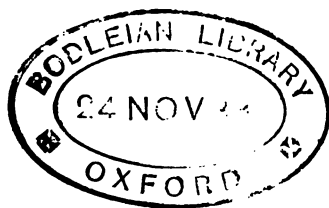


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"GROWING UP."

CHAPTER I.

THEY ARE AT HOME.

"THE mail has come in, children. They have sent up papa's bag. And here is a letter from Little Dene."

"What does that nasty cross Aunt Carly say, then?"

Mrs Casserly smiled. "See, dearie," she said, "the letter is still closed. I know you always like to know all you can about Aunt Carly, so I brought it to read it aloud."

"I would rather nurse my doll, mamma," said the elder of the lady's two little girls. "Go up, dolly," she went on. "I'll sing what mamma used to sing to little Bee there, when Bee was a baby and mamma dressed her.

One little footie, up on mammy's breast,
One little foot before my babe is dressed ;
Up goes my baby, right to mammy's eyes,
Down goes my baby, on my lap she lies !

There, mamma ! You see how my dolly walked up me, and walked down again ; a clever little dolly, she was ! that she was !" —when dolly had two or three kisses, and a good hug—"and I'm sure that's a great deal better than hearing anything about old Aunt Carly !"

"Yes, mamma," cried the other little girl, "and I shall nurse my dolly, and sing some songs to it, like Leonora does. Only they are your songs, you know, that you used to sing to me myself ; the word *dolly* just changed to *baby*, that's all, to fit.

Chick chicky, chick chup,	Chick chicky, chick chin,
My dolly wake up ;	For doll to go in ;
Chick chicky, chick chize,	First bath and then breakfast,
Doll, open your eyes ;	Then play all the day,
Chick chicky, chick cheer,	Come, dolly, wake up !
The water is here ;	Drive sleep all away !"

—when Beatrice, to be quite certain her dolly should

sleep any longer, caught it up out of its little cradle, and threw it to the other end of the room.

"Oh, very well," said Mrs Casserly, "then I shall read the letter all to myself, that is all. I shall begin at the envelope; here it is; 'Mrs Casserly, Golden Edge, Blue Mountain View, St Catherine's, Jamaica;,' and I shall go all through. You don't want the postage stamp, of course?"

"But, yes, mamma, we do!" cried both her little daughters, at once. "We want all the English things we can get! All English things are nice, because you are English, mamma! And you are so very, very nice!"

"And isn't Aunt Carly English?"

"Yes, mamma," said Leonora. "Only when you were a little tiny little girl no bigger than Bee here, and you were left in her care, she shouldn't have been cross to you!"

"And yes, mamma," said Beatrice, "and when you grew a little bigger, as big as Lee here,"—Lee was the short for Leonora; Mrs Casserly's two little daughters were always Lee and Bee to one another,— "and when you grew bigger still, she shouldn't have kept on being cross for ever!"

"Well," said Mrs Casserly, "perhaps I was naughty like you two, and threw my doll about, and was not polite enough to listen to what people brought to me."

"Oh no, mamma!" cried Lee and Bee, speaking both together again. "You never were naughty in all your life! Never! never! You are our own, own, own dear mamma!"

As the little girls had sprung to their mother and were kissing her, giving her a kiss for almost every word they spoke, she took the opportunity of letting them know they must keep their places beside her quietly; and drawing the letter from its envelope, she began to read it.

There was a great deal in it about Little Dene itself, which was a very pretty country house, just outside Hayle, in Cornwall; and there was a great deal about how Aunt Carly was going to take lodgings in the Scilly Isles, getting to them by a steamer from Land's End, past Penzance; and how she had been staying at Marazion, and rowing from there, in a boat, across to St Michael's Mount, where she had seen so *many rabbits run out of the sand-holes, and scamper over the grass, she had been quite surprised.*

This surprised Mrs Casserly's little girls also, who interrupted her, with their eyes full of wonder.

"Rabbits, mamma!" cried Lee.

"Rabbits, mamma!" cried Bee; for being born in Jamaica,—being Jamaicans, as the word is,—it was quite curious to these young Casserlys to find there could be rabbits in England, the same as in their own island; and their mother had to stop and explain. She explained other things, too, as other things came; but at last all the reading and all the explaining were done, and she had come to an end.

"Your af—fec—tion—ate aunt, Caroline Brydie," said Leonora Casserly, then, reading the last line,—*"Mamma!"*

"Yes, dear."

"Is Aunt Carly, is Miss Caroline Brydie of Little Dene so very, very old?"

"What would be 'very very' old, Leonora?"

"Why, ninety-six, like Cookie's old mother over in the huts, down by Roaring River. Is Aunt Carly ninety-six next birthday?"

Mrs Casserly laid her hand on Leonora's curly black hair, and stroked it. "You little goose," she said, with a kiss, "Aunt Carly is exactly sixty; and she is as upright as papa's sugar-canes, as strong as a yam, as able to go where she likes as the Ocho Rios River or the Yallahs, and as—"

Mrs Casserly stopped; which made Bee cry out, "Go on, mamma," and which made Lee cry out, "Go on, mamma," only that Lee said something more, as well.

"I know what you were going to say, mamma," it was. "I heard you telling papa the other day that the Blue Mountains always reminded you of Aunt Carly, because they were so still and so stony, and that yet the mosquitoes reminded you of her, because they always came to you and left their sting! I know!"

"Did I say that, Leonora dear?" said Mrs Casserly, looking very concerned. "And did you hear me? If so, I am very sorry, and I ought not to have said so much. For when my dear mother died, who was—"

"As nice as you, mamma?"

"A great deal better than I," answered Mrs Casserly, "and a great deal better even than you think me to be; for she never would say anything unkind of anybody, and I am afraid

I let you hear things sometimes that you should not hear. But listen to me now, and always remember it. When my dear mother died, and her half-sister, my Aunt Carly, had to take care of me, she did her very, very best to make me an obedient, patient, truthful, and honest girl."

"But then she used to say you must keep everything you had," said Leonora, "because you wanted it, every bit. And that you hadn't enough to give anything away to anybody; and that God helps those who help themselves."

"Yes; she did."

"And what was the verse your own dear mamma had taught you before? Something about—something about—"

"I know!" cried Bee, since her sister was hesitating, and was seeming to be hunting about in every corner of her brain-cupboard to find what was wanted. "It was—

We must shear the little sheep,
God's lesson is to love."

Both Lee and Mrs Casserly prevented Beatrice saying any more by giving a hearty laugh.

"Oh you, oh you, 'dicolous little individual!" cried Leonora; who, because she was thirteen months and three weeks older than Beatrice (as she used to reckon up, proudly), thought she was very much her superior; and who, besides, was very fond of using long words. "Shear and sheep!" she went on; "it wasn't anything about shearing sheep at all! That's just like you telling us the other day you had the toothache in the *ceiling* of your mouth! Mamma dear! Please! oh, do tell us the real right words, and make Bee ashamed!"

"Tell her yourself, my little daughter," said Mrs Casserly, looking comic.

"I—I—don't recollect them!" faltered the little lady Leonora, knowing very well what her mother meant by her comic look.

"Then will not you be ashamed as well as my bonny Beatrice?" asked Mrs Casserly, with one arm round each little girl, and looking right into Leonora's eyes. "For did not Bee-bee, who was my last baby, *try* to recollect, which was doing her best, whilst Leonora, for all she is the elder, didn't venture to try at all?"

There was no occasion for an answer, in words, to this. It

was answered by the passing of Lee's little hand over her plump little downcast face, and by the turning to and fro of her plump little shoulders. It was answered also by Bee picking up Lee's doll, which had slid out of her arms, and giving it back to her as if it were a real good comfort. For both the little girls' actions had a meaning. Leonora's meant she need not have thought herself more clever than her sister; Beatrice's meant that she didn't mind, and that she would like Leonora to be happy and glad for ever.

"Well," said Mrs Casserly, then, "we are ready for the verse now, I think; and I will repeat it:—

For we must share, if we would keep
God's blessings from above;
Ceasing to give, we cease to have;—
Such is God's law of love.

Do you think you understand it?"

Neither of the little girls answered. They seemed to be thinking, and wondering whether they did understand, or whether they did not understand; but at last Leonora spoke.

"Mamma," she said, "which did you do? Did you give away everything, like your own dead mamma told you to? Or did you keep everything for yourself, like your alive Aunt Carly told you?"

"I tried to do both," said Mrs Casserly, smiling. "I kept my toys, and my clothes, and my books, because I did not think they were mine to give away; I was so young. But I gave away all the kind words, and the kind little actions, and all the smiles, and looks, and cheerfulness, and patience, and pleasant ways and manners, I possibly could; and—it is very singular, dear children!—but the more I gave away of all these things, the more I had to spare!"

"Oh, you nice, you dear, mamma!" And when Bee had said this,—for it was Bee's little speech,—Bee slipped herself out from her mamma's arm, ran to the other end of the room to pick up the doll she had thrown there; and she brought it back, straightening its clothes, and smoothing its hair, as if she had not been quite so sweet and gentle as her mother had tried to be, and she had resolved to be gentle from that moment, always.

But Leonora's wonderment was not quite over. "Then, mamma," she said, "I suppose Aunt Carly wanted to keep

you, and not give you away,—just as she had taught you,—when papa happened to see you at Little Dene, and wanted you to come and live here in Jamaica?”

“Yes,” said Mrs Casserly, rising then from her chair. “It was something like that. Aunt Carly did not like me to come so far away from her; and it was all because she thought I shouldn’t like any life but English life, and that the climate here would not be good for me; so it was all meant to be careful and kind. Always recollect that, if ever you have to go and live with her, and always recollect I told you of it.”

“Oh, mamma!” both the little girls exclaimed, almost with a shiver, “we never, never, never could go and live with Aunt Carly! We never could live with anybody but you!”

At this moment there was a loud shrill cock-crow heard, making the children jump up and down, and flap their arms for wings, and shriek out the same sound the cock did, in imitation.

“*Marg the Mite Maroon!*” they went. With such a “Mar-oo-oo-on,” it made Mrs Casserly put her hands up to her ears as if deafened.

“You know mamma he does say *Marg the Mite Maroon!*” cried Beatrice. “Ever since that little Maroon was caught stealing the yams and squashes, and Bocko brought her in, and told papa he had caught her down by Mango Grove there, and she said—oh! the wicked little thing!—that Bocko didn’t, and she was only Marg, and sometimes The Mite, and had never stolen anything off the estate at all, and had never been near the Half-Way Tree or the Four Paths either; it was then, when papa was asking Bocko if he mightn’t be mistaken, that the red cock cried ‘*Marg the Mite Maroon!*’ and he has always seemed to say the same thing ever since, every day he has ever lived!”

“Yes, and you know Marg was punished, mamma,” said Lee, acting as appendix, or supplement, to her sister. “And when you said she might live on the estate, because she had no one to take care of her, and because she could help Cookie, or even Bocko himself, or do anything that came, we always now cry, ‘*Marg the Mite Maroon!*’ to her, and flap our wings, and make her so very, very red-and-yellow angry!”

Of course Mrs Casserly had to tell her little daughters that

this was exceedingly naughty of them, and exceedingly wrong ; and she had to forbid them ever doing anything of the sort again. She said, indeed, that if ever she heard of such bad behaviour any more, she would have to punish her little girls severely ; and she then told them to go to Nursie and ask her to get them ready for a drive, as she had ordered the buggy to be at the portico in an hour, and Bocko was sure to be there even now, since she had let so much time slip by. There was no need to tell this pleasant news to Lee and Bee twice over, as may be supposed ; they had run to Negress Nursie, they had even helped her to get them ready (instead of teasing her all they could, and undoing what she did, as was their usual fashion), and they were standing under the portico talking to Bocko, before it could have been thought possible.

The fact is that Leonora and Beatrice Casserly were what is called two "spoilt" little girls. They used to say, when their big brother Ernest told them this, that it was not true ; they used to say that they liked to do what they liked to do, and they didn't like to do what they didn't like to do, and that if people would always tell them to do what they liked to do, they should always do it ! And when Ernest cried out, "Spoilt ! spoilt ! spoilt !" again, and Mr Casserly cried out, "Spoilt ! spoilt ! spoilt !" again, the little girls frowned, and pushed their shoulders about, and tapped their toes, and looked so much like tears and unhappiness, that both their brother and their papa would give them kisses and caresses, which, everybody said, only "spoilt" them all the more. So it seemed to be quite a difficult thing to know what to do with these two young people. And now they have finished their chat with Bocko, who calls them "Missie Lenore, and Missie Beet," and their mamma is come, and they have started on their drive, a little shall be explained about them.

Their father is Sebastian Casserly, called the Honourable Sebastian Casserly (which the girls liked to hear), because he is the Custos of his parish, or the sort of magistrate, or justice, who acts like a governor of his district, and sees to all the laws being kept properly ; and he is the owner of an immense sugar estate, obliged to keep many many negroes and creoles on it, to work it. He has three children : Ernest, almost a man, for

he is just twenty years old (and seems to be quite a man to his little sisters), and Leonora and Beatrice, these two little girls. But there was a time when Mr Casserly had three more dear little children. They were girls, named Gwen, and Mabel, and Edith; and they used to play in the verandah that runs round their beautiful house, Golden Edge, and all the house-negroes used to be delighted to bring them the finest star-apples they could gather, and calabash blossoms, and pimento blossoms, and large bunches of south-sea rose, and white pea, and ponchetta, and Barbadoes pride, with any other flowers, as the seasons brought them; and all the hands on Blue Mountain View enjoyed having a talk with these dear little girls whenever they could. It may be supposed, therefore, how precious these little girls were to Mr and Mrs Casserly. They would have given all their land, and all their stock and wealth, to have saved their lives, and to have had them still to love and to laugh with, and to cherish and to hope for. Their lives were not to be saved, though. There came one of those terrible sweeps of fever that sometimes bring death into nearly every home in the West India Islands, killing perhaps one in a family, and perhaps more; and these three little girls, as well as Ernest Casserly, were struck down by it. Ernest recovered, but the little girls died, one on one day, one on the next, one on the third. It was terrible. Mr and Mrs Casserly were nearly dead themselves from grief; Ernest fretted so much after his sisters, it was quite a trouble to see him; and all their faithful servants thought they would never see any happiness in Golden Edge, or in all Blue Mountain View, any more. However, a new little baby-girl was born before the next dry season; that was Leonora. Beatrice was born the year after. Once more, when the oranges hung on the trees, and when the limes were ripe, and the shaddocks, there were pretty little hands stretched out to try and reach them; once more, when the coffee-berries were ready for picking, and the cotton-pods were bursting open, and it was sugar-pressing time, there were little feet to patter amongst the negroes and negresses, and little ears to be pleased with their soft, low songs; once more, when the "horned stock" and pigs were *being fed on plantain leaves, on cocoa head, and sour corn-meal, and cane tops*, there were little eyes fixed intently on

every operation, there were little voices asking a hundred questions ; and it seems easy to understand how Leonora and Beatrice were the pets of their father and mother and Ernest, and of everybody about the estate, how nobody could say "no" to them, how they were kissed and fondled and humoured, all people being afraid they would be taken away from them as their sisters had been taken away, all people loving them as much as they had loved their sisters, and letting them fill their place.

They can be heard now,—the little pussies !—as the buggy takes them through rows of naseberry trees, and granadillas, and sour-sops, and sweet-cups, and tamarinds ; as they pass tangles of convolvuluses, and plumbago, and yams, and clitoria ; as the air is scented deliciously, and the sky shows amber and gold, and crimson and purple, and seems to drop right down into fairy cities and fairy mountains, all made of clouds, and standing far off there, in the distant sea.

"Look !" Leonora cries, when there is a gap in the trees on her side.

A wide sheet of water is to be seen from there, with sugar canes by it, and the mountain mahoe, and the blood wood, and plantains, and palms, rearing their trunks a hundred feet high, straight and stiff, and twisting their leaves and branches in and out, as tight nearly as a roof. And clumps of logwood, and cactus, and aloe, and sedge, are at the edge of the water, making shadows on it, and letting the sun on it, between those shadows, look like silver in bright streaks and gleams. But Leonora does not call attention to these beautiful things. She is used to them, and sees them every day, and every minute of every day, when she chooses to open her eyes. What attracts her is a group of persons under a tall, wide-spreading Baobab tree, close at the water-side.

"Do you see them, mamma?" she cries. "The two gentlemen, and the little boy and girl, and the negress-nurse? They are the new planters up at the Cinchona Plantation ; and the little boy is Ivano Fonseca, and the little girl is Gabriella Fonseca ; and the two gentlemen are brothers ; so the one is a *papa* and the other is only an uncle ; and they have no *mamma*, that little boy and that little girl ; and that is *their ayah* ; and they used to live—oh ! somewhere else ! before

they came to live here in Jamaica—and, and, that is all I know about them !”

“How you have come to know so much,” laughed Mrs Casserly, “is a puzzle to me. I wish you could tell me as many things about Christopher Columbus, for instance, who came to Jamaica here, after he had lived ‘somewhere else,’ as you put it, and who went to live ‘somewhere else’ after that. Do you think you can?”

“Christopher Columbus,” answered Leonora, as though it were out of a book, and with her eyes very intent, and her face pursed up, “had a son, Luigi Columbus, who was made Marquis of La Vega, to do honour to his father ; and the old town, St Jago de la Vega, was called after him. Then Christopher Columbus had another son, Diego Columbus, who came here in 1555, and moved the town on to the other side of the river because he thought it was safer ; and it is now called Spanish Town ; and we live three miles away from it.”

“Very good,” said Mrs Casserly, amused at the way Leonora had run through her words, and then had seemed so glad to think her words were all over. “And now tell me how it is you know so much about those new folks still standing by the river.”

“Why, don’t you see, mamma,” put in Beatrice,—for Beatrice certainly thought it was her turn to speak now,—“we go into Cookie’s hut, and then some of the hands come to Cookie’s hut, and Bocko comes, and Marg the Mite Maroon comes, and everybody comes, and they talk, and we talk, and so we get to listen !”

“And mamma, dear,” asked Leonora, “don’t you think that when Ivano and Gabriella Fonseca come really to live at the house in the Cinchona Plantation,—I forget the name of it—”

“The High Steep.”

“Yes, the High Steep. Don’t you think, when they come really to live there, that we may stay with one another very often, and be real friends ?”

“Certainly,” said Mrs Casserly. “And I would go down and speak to them all now, to make them welcome to Blue Mountain View whenever they like to come, but that we have *been out long enough*, and must get home. It will not be *long before you have these new playmates*, I can assure you.”



"A wide sheet of water is to be seen from there, with sugar canes by it, and the mountain mahoe, and the blood wood, and plantains, and palms."—Page 15.

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The children were delighted at their mother's promise.

"Bee!" said Leonora.

"Yes?" answered Bee.

"*Marg the Mite Maroon!*" crowed Leonora; merely because she felt she was obliged to crow something, and that was the first sound she thought of.

It did quite as well as another. It did better than another, very likely; and it made the children ring out peal after peal of laughter, all the way home.

"Whip Tom Kelly! whip Tom Kelly!" sung, or crowed, Bee, in the midst of this, imitating the cry of a Jamaica bird heard in the mornings before rain is coming.

"And there flies a goat-sucker!" cried Lee.

Goat-sucker, goat-sucker, fly away far!

Goat-sucker jangle out your jar! jar! jar!

Look, Bee, look! and listen to him!"

The bird was really darting about in the cool air; sometimes in front of the Casserlys, sometimes behind them; sometimes high up, sometimes low; often uttering its jar-jar, and then being hidden by the branches of the cocoa-nut trees and the Ceibas; and clapping their hands to it when they could see it, and calling to it to come back again when they thought it was lost, the children remained in the same high glee till they reached the house, and then after a race round and round the verandah, Nursie came for them, and they were taken off for the night.

CHAPTER II.

THE HOME IS GONE.

"Missie Lenore, and Missie Beet," said Bocko to the little Casserlys, several weeks after, when they had slipped away from Nursie, and were looking at him, and the creole boy who worked under him, groom the horses. "Will Missie Lenore and Missie Beet sing ole Bocko a song?"

"Missie Lenore" at once began to chirrup as gaily as a bird. She was full of mischief, too; and she danced up and

down in time to her notes, and pointed her finger at Bocko saucily.

“ Bocko, Bocko, Bocko, ran all up the rock—oh !
Bocko had a stumble,
Bock began to grumble,
Bock flew back to Golden Edge
To cure his poor dear knock—oh ! ”

“ Yah, yah, yah, yah, yah ! ” laughed Bocko all the while, looking as delightedly at Leonora as if she had sung him something really pretty. “ But dat’s not de song ole Bocko wants. Missie Beet, you tell Missie Lenore what dat song be.”

“ Bocko, Bocko, Bocko, looked up at the clock—oh,”

chirrupped Beatrice, quite as full of sauciness and fun as Leonora had been.

“ Heard the clockie ticking,
Went guava picking,
Soon flew back to Golden Edge,
’Twas tiffin-time for Bocko ! ”

“ Yah, yah, yah ! ” Bocko’s laugh was going all the time again, and he was looking quite as happy still. “ But now,” he said, “ now Missie Lenore and Missie Beet hab had dat fun, will Missie Lenore and Missie Beet sing Bocko a real book-song ? Dat song of de silber dollar ?—where him keep on spinnin’, from tip-top de beginnin’, and keep on keepin’ on, lubly ? ”

It was quite glorious to hear Lee and Bee laugh, and to see them throw handfuls of amber maize-corns at Bocko, which struck his old head just as pea-shot would, and made him shake it till all had rattled off again on to the hard ground.

“ Oh, you dollary old Bocko ! ” Lee cried, making a mouth at him. “ It’s a song of sixpence ! A dear little, sweet English sixpence, not a great, broad, big Yankee dollar ! ”

“ All right, missie,” said Bocko, ducking his head to get out of another maize-shower ; “ sing him up ! ”

When Lee and Bee began—

“ Stand me up, please, and trundle me round,
On desk, or the table, a book, or the ground ;
Twirl me straight till I roll and I spin,
When flat down I tumble, all whitie and thin,

"Twist me twice, please, I spin on again,
I keep on my spinning, I never complain;
Round I keep twirling, you children all smile,
And this is the sing-song I sing you the while.

" 'Peru, Peru, I come from Peru;
Diggers dig down a long way through,
Diggers take pickaxes under the ground,
I am the silver the digger-boys found.

" 'Peru, Peru—and where is Peru?
Close by La Plata, and Panama too;
Railroad and steamer, you pay all your fare,
Sweet silver sixpences wait for you there.'"

"Dare now, missie both," said Bocko, "make dem air sixpences into dollars, and de song am worth ebber so much more! 'Sweet silber dollars wait for you dare!' Oh, glore, dat am lubly! Dare am eight sixpences go to make one dollar; and when dis Bocko go to Spanish Town, or go to Kingston, dis Bocko like to take de dollars to de stores, and it gib him plenty parcels to bring back to Golden Edge again. Dare!"

"Go to old Spanish Town, or go to old Kingston, you silly old Bocko!" cried Bee. "We are going to the High Steep, to stay with Ivano and Gabriella, so rubble on at the horse-work, you and Matteo, and let us all get ready. Wait a bit, though. Lee, let us get some flowers for Spot's and Tot's foreheads, to make them look pretty. Come along!"

The month was August, when, in Jamaica, the rhododendrons are in bloom, showing beautiful heads of crimson, and violet, and rose-pink, and wax-white flowers, and when there is plenty of jasmine about, and balsam, and verbena, and periwinkle, and allamanda, and hibiscus; so Lee said she should dress up Spot, and Bee said she should dress up Tot, and they had not been gone long before they were back again with some lovely nosegays, not forgetting large armfuls of guinea-grass for Spot and Tot to eat, and not forgetting, as they fed these patient creatures, to tickle their noses, and tickle their mouths, and tickle their ears with the grass ends, and to laugh and jump all the while, joyfully.

"Now, Spot and Tot will merrily trot," said Lee.

"Hark, Bocko," said Bee, "that's poetry."

"And trotting along, we'll sing them a song," Lee went on.

"Listen, Bocko," cried Bee again, "that's more poetry."

"So drive us all right, from morning to night," said Lee in addition.

"Ah ha, do you hear?" went Bee then, "that's poetry still."

Bocko did not wait for explanation, or more of such fun—he only grinned. But he fastened Spot's nosegays, Matteo fastened Tot's nosegays, and then, as the horses were ready for harnessing, they led them out, and the children scampered off.

The memory of all this came back to the little Casserlys again and again, and yet again—it never, in fact, quite died out of their hearts; for they never had another tease of old Bocko; they never sang him another song, whether of American dollars or English sixpences; they never saw their home again as they saw it then. There it stood, beautiful. It had an avenue of cocoa-nut trees in one direction; it had clusters of mangroves, where the Barbadoes blackbird, or the cling-cling, would roost, flying back at night always with that cling-cling sound. It had rows and rows of pine-apple trees, and pear-trees, and limes, and mangoes, and guineps. It had delicious ferns and wide-spread tobacco-plants, making banks at the walks' sides that gave more beauty at every step. Where there were little pools left by the rains (in the rainy seasons), the sanderlings, or sandpipers, would crowd round the edges of them, fluttering their spotted-grey little wings as they picked about for food. Where there were clumps of logwood trees, and they were in blossom, a thousand bees would be flying about each tree, sipping, and dipping, and stroking their fat gold thighs. When it was the beginning of the bean-season (December), in different patches about the grounds there would be sugar-beans, and cluster-beans, and machette-beans, and calavances, and bread-fruits, just young and tender, and a treat for everybody. Where the land went up and up, high and higher, towards the Blue Mountains, it was thickly covered with strong tall trees; these were called green-heart, bullet-tree, dog-wood, iron-wood, pigeon-wood, blood-wood, according as the names suited them; and mixed with them were the cotton-tree, the coffee-tree, and fig-trees, and wild lemon-trees, and mahogany-trees, and the great palmetto royal, as high as a high church, making Leonora and Beatrice quite able to understand what a forest was, and a thicket, and the "bush," and even a jungle. Then, also, in the low parts of Mr Casserly's estate, where it

was what was called savannas, or flat and clearer meadow, his little daughters would see the brown owl taking its rounds of flight after insects, and perching itself on some old tree-stump afterwards, till it was wishful to fly again. In those lower parts, too, there would be guinea-corn, barbary-corn, broom-corn; there would be indigo, rice, Indian kale, the cho-cho, the ochro, calalue, sorrel, eddoes, cassava, sweet potatoes, all sorts of things; some of them in large stretches, some only a plant or two, growing by chance; all of which were as familiar to Lee and Bee as poppies are to English children, as buttercups and daisies are, and the dog-rose, and hawthorn, and the meadow-sweet, and rye, and barley. Yes; Golden Edge was a lovely home. It was like a sweet neat drawing, for prettiness, in some parts; it was like a great bold oil-painting, for magnificence, at others; and if Leonora and Beatrice could only have looked into the future, they would have cast their little bright eyes round everywhere searchingly, making a large picture in their own minds for themselves of all they saw, and making it so deeply it should never be rubbed away.

But of course Leonora and Beatrice could not see into the future. Nobody can. And they fluttered about the verandahs like the white butterflies that were fluttering with them, and if their lovely Golden Edge had been suddenly changed by a fairy's wand into a simple negro-hut, it would have made no difference.

"Whip up!" cried first one and then the other, as they were seated in their car to start. "Go ahead! Be smart!"

They knew—the impatient little folks—that their new friends, Ivano and Gabriella, were waiting for them at the end of their long drive; they knew there were to be all sorts of delights ready for them when this drive was done; and they would have liked to have cut away all the fourteen miles of hill and valley and lively river which lay between them and the High Steep, that so they might have been there in one bound.

"Mamma," Lee said to Mrs Casserly, who was not going with them, but who was seeing them and their luggage safely packed in, "is it true that we may stay two whole nights, and not be back again till you and papa come for us?"

"*And are we really, really,*" put in Bee, in quite as great

an ecstasy, "to wake up to-morrow morning at the High Steep, and not find ourselves at Golden Edge at all?"

"Yes, dearies," answered their mother. "It is all true, every word. And I wish you will be as good as I hope you will be, and as happy as you hope yourselves will be."

"*Marg the Mite Maroo-on!*" crowed the cock at this instant, making Lee and Bee shout it in return, brimful of merriment.

"There's a good cockie!" shrieked Bee.

"You conversational old gentleman-fowl!" shrieked Lee; making a regular muddlement of the "conversational," it is true, but valiantly venturing on it nevertheless, in that liking she had for long words, or, as she might call it, difficult language. "You have cried out, you Golden Edge darling, exactly what I would have cried out myself! Only"—and then Leonora leant towards her mother, looking, for her, quite solemn—"don't forget, mamma dear, Bee and I have never said that once to Margie, ever since you told us not to."

"All right, my darling," said Mrs Casserly, "I did not think you would. You have always Lady Con, you know, to ask what you ought to do; and I am sure you will always ask her, and always obey. So good-bye, my little pair of sweeties. You will find some books for Briella amongst your night-clothes, and a present for Vano also. Good-bye."

"Whip up, then!" cried the girls, and off they were.

Their road was up, and up,—after they had got out of their own estate,—so that to be driven quickly was not possible. Their road was towards the Blue Mountain, and some miles up it; so it was sloping, sloping, although sloping gradually, all the way; and though Spot and Tot were so fine with their rhododendron nosegays, this did not make their legs any stronger, and Mr Casserly had always told his negroes they were to be very careful with his horses, and on no account to ill-treat them. In reality, therefore, no matter how many times Lee and Bee cried "Whip up!" no whipping up was done, and the vehicle was allowed to go along easily and pleasantly. It did not matter, in the least, everything was quite delightful; and the little girls took everything delightedly, letting their tongues run on, harum-scarum, as fast as the horses' hoofs,

"Are those birds lap-wings?" one cried.

Then, without waiting for an answer, the other said,
 "There go some bald-pates !

Bald-pate ! You bald-pate !
 Out of your nest much too late !
 Fly to the clouds, fly to the sea,
 Never come near my gun and me ! "

"Is that a patchary?"

"Is that a sanderling?"

"Are those butter-birds? And shall we have any butter-birds cooked, I wonder, up at the High Steep?"

"And Bee," said Lee, "I wonder whether we are much too soon for the shoveller-ducks, and for the dear white cranes?"

Crane, Crane !
 Bring wind and bring rain ;
 Stand upon one leg,
 Fly upon none leg,

Diego Columbus will take you to Spain.

But there, Bee ! I don't suppose you recollect what a crane is ! You are such a young Bee, thirteen months and three weeks younger than I am, so that it is no wonder if you don't know anything at all ! "

"But I do know !" cried Beatrice, flushing up. "A crane is a crane, and you can't say any more ! "

"*Any more !*" cried Leonora. "So, you see, I have said it !" which made Beatrice leave off the tears she was just beginning to burst into, and break out into a laugh instead, Leonora helping her, and the negroes helping also, so that there was a laugh all round.

And then, as the road went through rows and rows of wooden huts, negresses sitting at the doors of some of them, and negro children crawling all about, the Casserlys tried to sit very properly and demurely ; because they reminded one another their papa was a Custos, and they must show that a Custos had little ladies for his daughters who knew how to behave. It was well, for it rested them a little bit, and cooled them, and gave them time to shake out their pretty pink muslin frocks, and pull their flapping hats straighter and into better shape.

"Bee," said Lee, however, directly they had passed through

and had bowed, like little queens, from side to side, when the negresses had saluted them and smiled; "let us make riddles. One came into my head when we passed that blue gum tree now:—When can we make gum come?"

"You never can," declared Beatrice, in indignation.

"Oh but you can," cried Leonora. "And it's as easy as possible. Take off the G and give him a C, and then the gum *is* cum!"

"What spelling!" said Beatrice, tossing her head.

"Never mind," answered Leonora. "It's only to amuse us, you know. So it's your turn now to ask me. Go on."

It took Bee some little time to make a riddle up; and she didn't make a very clever one, even after the time had been taken. Neither did she bring it out very sharply and very quickly, to make it pass for clever.

"How," she said, at last, and then she stopped. "How," and then she changed it into "What," with another stop. "What—No, no! I mean—*When* can you put a face into some lace?"

"Face and lace," said Leonora, considering. "I know. Take off the F and give it an L."

All of which was easy enough, and simple enough, certainly. Only, as Leonora said, it was only to amuse them, and as they were amused, that was the end of it as well as the beginning, and it was all over.

"Just one more," said Lee, though, not yet tired of that part of her pleasures. "Just one more a-piece. Here's mine. At least, here it will be, in a minute. Count twenty, and then I shall be ready."

"One, two, three, four, five," began Bee, meaning to go on steadily and regularly till she got to about fifteen, and then to go slower, and slower, so as to give Leonora time. She had only counted up as far as five-and-a-half though, that is, she was just saying the *s* for the six, when Leonora began.

"Half of it is French," she cried. "So pay attention:—What is the matter with an English infant? It has only one *i*, which is an eye, you know. And what is the matter with a French enfant? It has only one *knee*, which is an e, you know. There."

"It isn't fair," declared Beatrice. "You heard the

Feurtados say that the other day to mamma. Besides, it's a grown-up riddle! And besides, you gave me the answers, and didn't let me guess."

"You think of a grown-up one then," said Lee; "then we shall be even. I don't care. Ask me why I am like a French bedstead? Because I am a *lit*. And why a sheep is like a French pair of stockings? Because it's a *bas*. Ask me anything."

"There," complained little Bee, quite put out. "You have said the answers again. And I could have told you those two, nicely."

"Because you've heard them before! Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Leonora, laughing so merrily that Beatrice could not help laughing with her, and all things were brought into good humour again.

Riddles were not likely to make any more bad humour either; for riddles were done with, and something else at hand to give amusement or interest instead. There were some Abyssinian bananas, of which the children had not seen many, because they were new to the island; there were some tea-shrubs and jalap-shrubs, both new also; there was the view of the sea, with Kingston, and its harbour, and quite a fleet of ships, and the Palisadoes, and Port Royal near; there were plains, and hills, and gorges, with the great river running deep down in them; there was, at last, the approach to the Cinchona Plantation, the FONSECAS' estate, itself; with the house, the High Steep, on a clearing on the mountain-side, and the little FONSECAS trotting on ponies to meet the Casserlys, and ask them how-do-you-do.

All things seemed so lovely, so delicious. Ivano and Gabriella cantered by the side of Leonora and Beatrice, full of the most welcome news. They were all to go up the plantation in the morning, on ponies, up the bridle-path; it would take them in and out the cinchona trees, and they would see the coolies stripping off the bark, which was all the trees were kept for, and all that was required. They were all to go on the river, in canoes or bungies. They were to go to the Bluff, if they had time, and were to see if they could see the White Horses from it the other side of the bay. They were to go and *gather ground nuts, or pindars*. They were to go to the little *cays, or islands, out at sea*, and look for booby-eggs and the

old man bird ; and see if they couldn't fish for turtle, and black crab, and yellow-tails, and grunts. They were to hear the mocking-bird mock the rice-bunting ; they were to hear the May-bird drawl out its cuck — cuck — cuck ; and they were to hear the dear white wing dove, with its soft low coo. All the months were mixed up, indeed, in the children's hospitality ; and if the Casserlys had been going to stay at the High Steep the whole year round, they could scarcely have seen all they were promised to see, and all of which it was such delight to hear.

Indoors, also, all things seemed extra lovely ; all things seemed extra delicious. Leonora and Beatrice thought they had never tasted such calipash, such pip-pip, such preserved cherries and cashews. There never had been such pomegranates at Golden Edge ; there never had been such grapes, and such bananas. It was beautiful to run out and pick ackees, and before eating the fruit, to admire its fine red skin. It was beautiful to see the ostrich feathers, and the ostrich eggs, and the assegais, and the cowrie-work the Foncescas had brought from their " somewhere else ; " and to hear them talk about bush-boks, and kraals, and the Kaffirs' wild yow-yow songs. It was beautiful to sit, just talking absurd nonsense, out in the verandah, with the clematis twining all over it, and the passion-flower, and the convolvulus, and the open roses with their damask streaks.

" Here's another riddle," cried Lee ; for they all seemed to have the riddle-fever, and to have it so badly they wanted a riddle doctor to cure them. " What European men are the best to tie the grapes to ? The Poles ! "

" Here's another," cried Ivano. " Which country ought to go to hospital ? Switzerland, because it has a Berne ! "

" And which country can we cook ? " cried Gabriella. With all of them shouting out at the same moment she did—it was so plain—" The Turkey ! " Whilst Beatrice hobbled out something about " and when we've cooked the Turkey, what other country will Cookie find in the cook-house ? " to be told by all the others, when they answered " Greece," that she had not made that up, all of it, by herself out of her own head, for that they had heard it before, they were certain.

And then there came a shudder all at once, everywhere,

and a distant threatening sound. Then the sea, far away, could be seen beaten up into high and angry surf; the clouds, distant a minute ago, were rushing inland rapidly, blotting out the light, and making the air cold and dark.

The children left off their laughter, and looked at each other without a word.

"Come in, missies all! Come in, massa!" said the Fonseca ayah, hurrying to them, and hurrying them in.

The shudder came again, lasting longer, bringing with it more terrible sounds. As the children felt, as the children heard, they clung round the ayah, filled with alarm.

"What is it?" Gabriella Fonseca cried. "Moussa! tell us what it is!"

Heavy swirls of wind hurtled round for answer, bending down the tree-branches, sweeping down tangle and tangle of the beautiful creepers about the verandah, the flower-heads and leaves wounded into shreds. A pour of rain and hail came too, falling with the sharp sting of shot; the thunder roared and echoed, vivid lightning flashed; and the house-negroes ran to the shutters of every window, all round, closing them, and helping each other to shoot in the bolts, whilst the wind would let them shoot them in at all.

"We are in the dark!" was Gabriella's cry then. "Moussa, hold me tight!"

Moussa, as full of fear as Gabriella, was not appealed to for soothing and for consolation long. Mr Fonseca entered the place, from the far end, as another blast of wind boomed against the shutters as if it would burst them in, and the whole floor shook; and the children, springing to him in Moussa's place, thought there could be only safety if they could feel his arms round them, and hear his voice.

"Lights, Moussa," Mr Fonseca said at once. "Tell them to bring lights; the children shall stay here whilst they can."

"Briella, my little one," he turned then, and said caressingly to his little daughter, "and Vano, my man, and you two little visitors, I am going to ask you to try to be little heroes and heroines to-night. I cannot let you go to bed; for it may be—There! I only said *it may be*. Briella! pluck up *courage! it may be*, the hurricane will get worse, and I shall

have to take you for shelter to the cellar under the kitchen huts ; we will stay here whilst we can, though."

Boo-oom ! went the wind. Burr-rr ! Cr-r-rash !

"We hear it here," said Mr Fonseca, to try and pacify the children. "It is not so loud, perhaps, elsewhere, so do not be frightened with a little sound ; and here are the lights. So get to the new books Leonora and Beatrice have brought you, and read and amuse yourselves, and show me your bravery."

"Ay, but I must go," he said, for the children, when he was putting them away from him, could not bear to be left alone, and were entreating him to stay. "The people will be wanting me. I am bound to see what is going on."

Boo-oom ! Burr-rr ! Cr-r-rash !

It was the wind again ; when the children had just tried to settle themselves at their books, and their faces were not quite so white, and some remark of Bee's had even made them smile.

Boo-oo-oom !

There it was again. This time at the moment when Moussa had brought in some fruit and sweetmeats, and had shown Leonora and Beatrice how they could try and get some sleep, both together, on a settee ; at the moment when she had curled Gabriella up on one large rocking chair, and Ivano on another, and had given them all shawls or other wraps, in case they should feel cold.

Boo-oo-oom, again ! with a dash against the house-walls as if wood were splitting and iron clamps were being wrested out of place. Boom !

Boo-oo-oo-oom ! Hur-rr-rr-tle !

And that was how the strange night passed. The children would read a little, then sleep a little, then wake in their trouble and their discomfort, and shiver, and read, and sleep again. Mr Fonseca would come in now and then, telling how that last swirl had blown the roofs off a group of negro-huts ; he would stay, making the children warm and happy by the mere strength of the trust they had in him ; but then he would be called away by some new disaster to give some new directions, and Moussa, or whoever else came instead of her or with her, did not seem to give any real comfort at all. The storm was not here, they said (in their queer coloured-English) ; the storm

was over at Blue Mountain View ; this was only the blow at the storm-end. Blue Mountain View would have it fiercely, would have it to the roots.

"Blue Mountain View!" cried Leonora to Beatrice, when she had heard this, and heard it again, and at last she began to understand it. "Oh, Bee! will it go up to Golden Edge? And Bee, where is mamma? Oh, mamma! mamma!"

"Oh, mamma! mamma!" echoed poor Bee, quite breaking down, and crying with all her tired little heart. "And oh, papa! papa! and Ernest, Ernest! where are you all, and when will you come to us and take us home?"

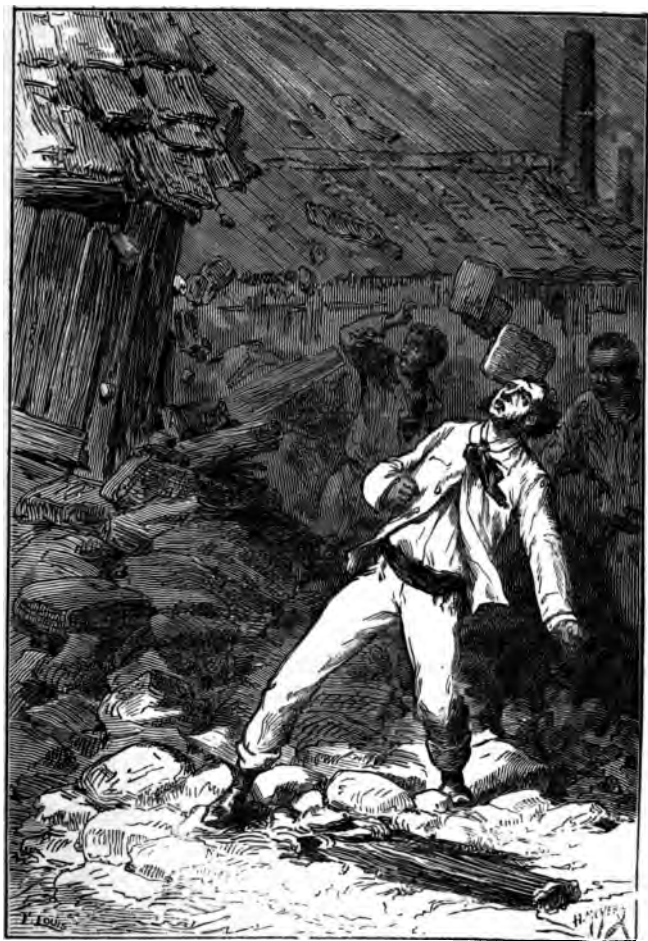
Never. In the morning when there was no longer that terrible boom, and that terrible burr and crash, and when the shutters all the way round the High Steep could be unfastened and bolted back, and there were fallen trees to be seen, and a litter of branches and house-timber and bruised fruit strewing the ground, some negroes, who were not Mr Fonseca's people, but who were the Blue Mountain View people, came at their quickest to have Mr Fonseca see them directly, and when Mr Fonseca had seen them, he looked very grave, and he had some fearful news to tell.

"Oh, mamma! papa! and Ernest, you dear Ernest! when will you come to us and take us home?"

Never.

Mr Fonseca did not tell that in one plain word to little Bee when he heard her sobs. He did not tell it in one plain word to Leonora either. He only took the children close to him, one in each arm, as he sat, and then he spoke to them as kindly as a woman would have spoken, trying to make them comprehend.

"You are not going away from here for a few days," he said. "I am going to let you stop with my little boy and little girl. You will like that, you know. It is because I have seen some of the Golden Edge people. They have just come. They came very quickly, as quickly as they could; for they have not brought good news, and they wanted me to know it. They say that the hurricane was terrible at Blue Mountain View. They say it swept up the hill, and was more terrible still at Golden Edge. They say that every window on *the storm side* gave way; they say the doors gave way; they



"Your papa was out among the falling huts; a heavy piece struck him, and pieces were striking the negroes all around." —Page 32.

some of the best bread from the family cook-house, and some honey, and some biscuit and coffee, as Gabriella declared he should have, since she herself would tell Moussa she wanted it, and Moussa would see it was sent down.

"Yah! Mick hab brought de good news!" Mick cried again, as he was being led away. "And Mick didn't let dem shoes go when dey was taken off Mass Ernest, and Mass Ernest hab lie down! No! Mick hab clean dem shoes ob mornins and mornins; Mick hab made dem polish as bright as de sun; but ebery time Mick clean dem shoes now any more, Mick will clean dem wid de joy of him own nigger eyes, and dat will make dem dazzle like de diamond jewel! yah!"

"You good boy, Mick!" said Leonora, stroking his arm.

"You, you goodest old boy!" said Beatrice, crying it after him as he turned with another "yah!" and another flourish of his cherished shoes.

After which, as the Casserlys walked about, they did not seem so crushed and so solemn nearly. When Ivano and Gabriella spoke tenderly to them, and looked at them with sad eyes, and said it would be their pleasure to do what they liked to do, the Casserlys almost wondered why they spoke so, and looked so, and why they did not run on from one game to another, being sure that they would like whatever came, and be as happy at one as at the other. When, too, Mr Fonseca said in the house that he had seen Mick, and had sent to Golden Edge to say he would ride over there in the morning, to see in what way he could best help Ernest, the little Casserlys were very nearly wondering what help was wanted, and why Mr Fonseca need send at all. They were so young, that was how it was. They had never seen a house shattered and flung to the ground, like a tumbled house of cards; and they could not think how much destruction it meant, and how much agony and misery. They had never been without a mamma and papa; when they had been in any pain or any vexation they had always known where they could go for kisses and comfort, where they would be sure to have somebody to pity them, and to assure them their unhappinesses would soon be gone; and they could not tell what it would be when the pains came, and the vexations, *and no kisses and comfort came with them, because the kind*

mamma and kind papa who had given them were not here to give them any more. Passing through the world as all happy children do (and ought to do), just getting up of mornings with a great big hearty enjoyment of what there is before them, and just revelling in one delight, and revelling in the next, and revelling in all, the little Casserlys were beginning to have a great big hearty enjoyment of what there was before them at the High Steep, forgetting, in their joy, that Ernest was saved, that they had no longer a father or a mother; and even had Ivano and Gabriella proposed to romp round the verandah (which had now been swept and tidied), Lee and Bee would soon have been worked up to be as merry as they, and they would have liked the chance.

But at night, when Moussa had put them to bed—and Moussa had not been like their own nurse, and had not been a bit like their own mamma—and there was no bridle-path through the cinchonas to take their attention, and there was no Mick to bid good-bye to before he started for home, and no—“no anything,” as little Bee thought—then a sob broke out from one little girl, which made a sob break out from the other little girl, and they felt what had come to them, terribly.

“Bee,” sobbed Lee.

• “Yes, Lee,” sobbed Bee.

“Are you thinking of—of—of mamma?”

“Yes—yes—yes!” went poor Bee, trembling under her coverings, and wetting her pillow with her hot tears.

It came the other way too, a little while after.

“Lee,” cried Bee.

“Yes, Bee,” said Lee, quite glad to speak, although it was only a shivering kind of speak after all, for she had been crying silently, choking her crying for fear Bee should hear, and to say something seemed like company. “I hear you Bee. I—I am not asleep, Bee. Are you?”

“No. And, Lee—”

“Yes, Bee.”

“Are you—are you—thinking—thinking of papa?”

It was such a mournful little “pa—pa—aa,” with such a big cry coming with it, that Leonora burst out into “Papa, papa!” and into “Mamma, mamma!” and there were so many tears *running down* each little pair of cheeks, it might

palisades (although they are small ones) without getting difficulties and damage; and in a moment or two Leonora had thrown her load down because it had scratched her arms, Gabriella shrieked at hers, because it was slitting her frock, and poor little Bee could not get rid of hers at all, for one point had caught her hair, and the more she pulled, the more her hair became twisted, and she couldn't help a little (a very little) sharp cry.

"Oh! bother!" cried Vano, going back into English, and not very gentlemanly, or kingly, English. "That's the worst of girls!"

He had the best of them, though (as most people will), when he had the sense to do the boys' work himself, and to set the girls to do that for which they were fit. He carried the heavy wood; they were just to gather guinea-grass, wire-grass, bur-bush, withered maize-stalks, anything that would twist and twine in and out of his palings, when he had stuck the palings up, to make them like a wall; and the girls did this lighter labour so effectively and so nattily, Vano was able to become grand again, and talk in what he called his Royal Bossese.

"Soom kar yak funchums?" he said, pointing upwards.

"Tar munk-munk," said Leonora.

"Sar poof lash-mash-ty," said Gabriella.

Whilst little Bee, with quite as much gravity, answered, "Tum-tum wee cam-cam;" for they all supposed Vano was meaning something about putting a roof on, when (pray observe the *when*), when he had succeeded in getting up his walls; and they all wanted him to know that they supposed so, and that they would do whatever he bid.

"Ky kimps yak chum-chimp zitzitta," he said next, even more grandly than ever.

What he wanted was perfectly clear. It was plantain-leaves to keep the sun out, so his sister thought; and she was soon busily gathering them. It was roses, or any flowers, to hang down from the roof and make it look bowery, so Lee thought; and she looked for the handsomest she could find. It was yams and shaddock, or what not, to be stored over their heads for their eating, so Bee thought; and she was quite a clever housekeeper, or meant to be quite a clever housekeeper, in peering about for such as were ripe and pulpy, and would

make the best show. When they all were back again, too, loaded, although it was impossible that they were all three right, Vano looked exactly as if they were (for, to tell the truth, he had not any direct meaning when he spoke, beyond "a roof" somehow, and beyond grandeur, and "bossing"); and he greeted them all in the same invented bit of Bossese, listening to their bits in reply, and all went on just as admirably as if they were speaking plain English, and were all equal, not (as they pretended) three of them coolies and one their master. The hut never got built, it is hardly necessary to say. Children's huts, or children's projected erections of any sort, never do. They are castles in the air, which is exactly where they ought to be. Some of them get a foot or two high; some of them even may get a whole side put in; some may get just the outline, or the shaping, of a roof; but the best part of them is that part which remains only in the children's minds, and which therefore can grow as their minds grow, keeping always beautiful and unseen.

With these children, up in the gardens of the High Steep, it was not material that was wanted to have finished quite a Robinson-Crusoe-like habitation, if that were what they had planned. The girls were so busy, for their part, they had piles of everything round about Vano, waiting only for Vano to handle and use them.

"Um chanks ki sufty," said Gabriella, bringing more leaves.

"Ki toots," said Leonora, laying down fresh balsams.

"Ka chinkum, winky-wanky kosso," said Bee, having had time to think of these words in her long foraging, and bringing them out on her reappearance, with quite a flourish.

So if Vano could only have had his palings upright, and if he could only have stuck them into the earth hard, without seeing them lop this way, and lop that way, and lop right out altogether, the girls and he between them could soon have twisted the stalks and grasses into some kind of a thatched top as well as a wall-lining, and they might perhaps (the whole thing being about the size of a stumpy sentry-box) have squeezed their four young selves into it, like toy-animals pushed higgledy-piggledy, anyhow, into a Noah's ark, and have thought they had constructed the most commodious

building on the island, and been proud of their cleverness accordingly.

There was something the matter, however, with the High Steep garden ground, perhaps. It refused to hold up those blown-down old plantation-palings, let Vano bang, bang, bang at them as hard as he liked ; or else those same blown-down old plantation palings had never had any straight-up-stick-tion in them, and so the garden ground could not help it. At any rate, the children had to go indoors, and the children had to have their meals, and the children had to go to bed, with the hut still only a heap of very promising materials ; and the children had to do this one or two more days and nights, always something occurring to keep the hut a no-hut and only the hope of one ;—with none of the servants saying anything about Blue Mountain View or Golden Edge in Leonora's and Beatrice's hearing ; with the little girls themselves only crying out "mamma ! papa !" once or twice when some very sharp memory came to them. And then Mr Fonseca was seen to be riding up from that negro settlement Lee and Bee had passed through towards the High Steep ; he was seen to be going by the sea-view and the gorge and the river ; he was seen to have another horseman with him ; and when the two came nearer and nearer, the other was Ernest, and his little orphan sisters were running to meet him, and he was jumping off his horse and holding them in his arms.

"Little Lee ! little Bee !" was all he could say, as they all went together into the house.

It was so strange. He seemed so quiet, the children thought. He seemed so old, and so full of tenderness and love.

"We won't talk much," he said, as they asked him why he had not come before, and why he had been so long, and why he had not come in the carriage so that he might take them home. "We won't look at what is gone by. We will try and forget it ; it is not good. It is not good for little girls to be fretting and sad. We will talk of something else ; about what is to come."

The children clung to him, the children kissed him again ; seeming to feel it would be right to obey, though they could *not have said why*.

"*I have no place fit for you yet,*" he said. "It was no

use to come ; and — and — I have been somewhere else. Little ones," he went on, "it will be many days before the house is rebuilt. It will be—"

And they wondered why he stopped, and why, when he had stroked their heads and had kissed them, he tried to hide his face.

"Will Nursie be there when we go back?" Leonora asked, out of her wonderment and her feeling that everything was sad.

"No," Ernest answered. "No."

"Oh, Nernie, have you sent Nursie away?"

"No, no, she never would have left Golden Edge, whilst I was master of it." And then Ernest added very slowly, "Nursie was killed."

"Then Bocko!" said Leonora, with a quick cry. "Will Bocko be there? Poor Bocko?"

"No."

"Nor Margo? Margo the maroon?"

"No."

"Nor Matteo?"

"No."

"Oh, Ernest! We knew we had no mamma!—oh, mamma, mamma! We knew we had no papa, but we didn't know there was no Nursie, and no Bocko, and no Matteo, and no little Maroon!"

Leonora's tears could not be stopped then. Bee's, too, were streaming from her eyes; and for a minute their brother knew it was well to let the little sorrow come. Children cry after a bird, he thought; children cry after a little pet kitten; it could only be right that these should cry at the death of servants who had served them faithfully, and who were as true as friends. He would not have liked to have seen his little sisters with no love in their hearts: that would have shown that they were cruel and selfish, which they had never been. But he did not want children to have more unhappiness than their little hearts could bear; so after a little he tried to make them think of something else.

"I am not going away to-night," he said. "I shall stay till to-morrow. You like that, eh? And then I shall go back to Golden Edge," he went on, "and they will soon fit me up a room or two, and I shall see all the rest done properly. That

is not a place for two little girls who want a governess and a nurse, and all sorts of play-room, is it?"

"Besides," Ernest said in another minute, when Bee had laid her head on his shoulder, and Leonora was looking at him intently, trying to take all these new ideas into her young brain, "Mr Fonseca is good enough to say he will let you stay with Ivano and Gabriella till I have quite made my plans. And you are very happy here, eh?"

Bee began to sob, something about the ponies they were promised to ride, and the Bluff they were to go to, and the fish they were to try to catch, and the birds they were to hear, leaving off all her sobs as she went on, and breaking out into smiles as she told about what they had done at the High Steep already, and about this game and the other game, and about their little friends who were as kind as kind. But Leonora, with those older eyes of hers, and with that older understanding, had some quick thought come out of her long pondering, and brought it out.

"Then how long are we to stay with Vano and Briella?" she asked, sharply.

"A fortnight, perhaps. A month. Even a little longer."

"When that time is gone, shall you come for us to go home?"

"It may be that the house will not be ready, even then," said Ernest. "And you are quite glad to be here. That is certain."

"Yes, the High Steep is nice, and Vano and Briella are nice," answered Leonora; evidently with something behind, for all that.

"And the hands are going to clear away the bur-bush," put in Beatrice, to give a specimen of the niceness, "and the hands are going to squeeze the limes, and do all the bottling, and they are going to plant the cane plants, and make a little sugar, and Vano and Briella have never seen it done before, because this is their first year, and they want to see it, and the hands say they may, and Moussa—"

Leonora interrupted her, or else her string of coming events might have gone on for a few minutes longer.

"Be quiet!" she said; with a little half slap, which made Bee put her head on Ernest's shoulder again, poutingly, and made Ernest tap Leonora under the chin with a little word of

kind reproof. "We may stay here," she went on, after this, "for a fortnight, we may stay here for a month, we may stay here longer, because the people will be building up Golden Edge; but when it is ready, are you coming?"

"I shall come many times whilst it is being built," said Ernest, still trying to put her off. He did not want her to know too much, all in one day.

"Yes, that will be nice," said Leonora. "It will seem like—like—seeing dear mamma and papa! But when shall we go to Blue Mountain View, and go back to live at Golden Edge?"

"Perhaps," said Ernest, seeing that the truth must come, "I may think it better for you to live somewhere else. How would that be?"

"To live here?"

"No. I could not trouble Mr Fonseca with my little Lee and Bee. They have to be turned into clever girls, and to learn what other girls learn, so that they may grow at last into clever ladies."

"Girls have governesses to do that."

"Yes; some of them. But some girls are sent to school."

"No," said Leonora, shaking her head. "No. Mamma said there was no school near Golden Edge. And there isn't. Mamma knew."

"But she learnt to play pretty tunes, and to sing pretty songs, and where was it?" asked Ernest. "Where did she have her drawing-master, and her dancing-master, and learn French and German, and the rest?"

"In England!" cried Leonora, with a quick look in her eyes.

"Yes. Where I had to go. You know I was away from Jamaica for four years. At Mill Hill. And Mr Fonseca and I have been talking about it;"—Ernest was speaking very gently, to make it seem less of a blow and a surprise; but Leonora seemed, at last, to know all he was going to say, so that she could have said it for him, and her little heart was beating rapidly;—"and I can only make it go one way."

"Bee!" cried Leonora. "Hark! Pay attention!"

"You must be nice sisters, you know; just as you were nice daughters; and just as you had a nice dear mamma. I must not let you grow different to what she meant you to be."

"Bee!" Leonora was crying still. "Hark! Listen!"

"And so I have written to England, and to Little Dene, and the mail goes out to-morrow, and in about seven weeks' time I shall have an answer, and we shall know."

"Oh, Bee! oh, Bee!" cried Leonora, as though nothing would hold her, and her heart would break; "we are to go to Little Dene, to be with Aunt Carly!"

CHAPTER IV.

ACROSS THE SEA.

WELL, but to go to England might be nice after all. At any rate, to make preparations for going to England was nice, undoubtedly. What it meant, at the beginning, was to know very much more about Jamaica than Leonora and Beatrice Casserly had ever known before; for what it meant was, that after staying some weeks at the High Steep, they were taken straight away to stop at a beautiful hotel at Kingston till the English mail was ready to sail out of the harbour; and to be at Kingston, which was the London of Jamaica, and the Liverpool of Jamaica, both rolled into one, was just what the little girls had been promised ever since they could remember being promised anything at all; and every step they were taken was a delight to them, and every sight they saw brought new surprise.

Shops! They seemed to be always going into shops (only they were called stores), and only coming out of them to go into more. Their brother was not always with them; for the mistress of the hotel—which was also called a boarding-house—took charge of Lee and Bee; and there were many people in the town who had known their mother and father, and who came to see them every day, and took them away on little short visits; and so, between them all, Ernest knew that what was wanted for his little sisters' voyage could be got better if he did not interfere; and he left the children in the town whilst he went backwards and forwards to his plantation and to Golden Edge, where the ruin brought about by the hurricane was not yet all repaired, and his presence was still much *required*.

"I would like some presents for their aunt at Little Dene, too," he said to the ladies. "When they unpack, they must not have quite empty hands."

This seemed to be the nicest shop-visiting to do of any ; it was so splendid to go down Harbour Street, and into De Cordova and Gall's, with full permission to look at all their "native products" (which had seemed such long words to Lee and Bee) and curiosities.

"Ah, these dear little humming-birds !" Beatrice cried. "These dear little darling little stuffed things, just as I have seen them alive, with their dear little nests, and their tiny little wings spread, ready to fly !"

"And these lace-bark fans !" said Leonora. "Do look ! And this seed-work, and this shell work, and these flowers made of fish-scales, and these made of the dagger-plant, and these d'oy—d'oy—what is its?—made of ferns ! I wonder which we are going to buy !"

Perhaps this, perhaps that, perhaps none. The children were quite unconcerned, and were soon busily engaged reading labels,—and reading them very badly, since they had only had a governess now and then, and when their mamma had tried to teach them herself, they had always tried to get away. Preserved Ginger, these labels were, Guava Jelly, Black Crab Paste, Marmalade Dulce, Jamaica Relish, Jamaica Pepper Pot, Preserved Calapee, Cocoa Plums, Pine Apples, Turtle Eggs, Turtle Tablets, Green Turtle Fat. Altogether they seemed charming ; and the children would have proceeded to have read a great many more, but that their friends had made their purchases, without asking their opinion (it was not necessary, you see !), and were calling them to take hold of their hands and go elsewhere.

It was past the Custom House, and the wharfs, and other stores and offices, where they could see notices about pitch-pine lumber, white pine lumber, and Cypress shingles, and Wallaba shingles, and Boston chips ; and where, because Lee and Bee were Jamaicans, and were used to it, they knew these meant different sorts and lengths of wood. It was past where they could see barrels of alewives (a fish), packages of arrowroot, pimento, nutmegs, indigo, cinnamon ; a turtle factory (for preserving turtles, *though not for making them*, because they are born, in the

sea); notices about colts, and mules, and mares, and goats; other notices about ebony, fustic, camwood, hides, hogs, shooks, tow, dibbles, with all the rules about how some of these (and quantities more) had to pay duty, either to come in or out, and how some were free.

"Look!" was the exclamation of one or the other little girls at every turn. For they had only been into Spanish Town a few times, which was quite a tiny place compared with Kingston; and for the rest, they were only accustomed to the soft, green, dusky foliage of their mountain home, with its lazy quiet, and its great blaze of golden sky; and all this stir and bustle kept their little eyes in a perpetual spin.

The very names of the streets occupied them.

"Orange Street," Lee cried, reading this as they went along, "and King Street, and Port Royal Street, and West Street, and East Street; and Hi—Hi—what's that? Can't read that, Bee—can you?"

"H, i, g, h, h," went Bee, doing her best to spell, but failing. "Two h's in the middle of a word. Nobody can read that. It isn't likely."

It was High Holborn. Only it did look strange, written all in one word, and being called Highholborn Street. Yet it only meant that in the colonies people like to have what they have left behind them in England; and that in the colonies things get a little bit turned and twisted, let these people love them, and try to keep them in memory, the best they can. And everybody knows how words change, and how spelling changes too, in the course of time.

Not that it mattered to Lee and Bee. The next moment they were laughing at Water Lane, and Rosemary Lane, and Rum Lane, and Luke Lane, and Mark Lane; and, the next, they were reading the headings of newspapers,—the *Jamaica Creole*, the *Jamaica Witness*, the *Jamaica Instructor*, the *Colonial Standard*, the *News Letter*—and more; for they made happiness and interest out of everything as has been said, everybody was very kind (they sometimes wondered why, but everybody knew), and to pass from one thing was only to seize upon the next, and to find it just as pleasant as what had gone before.

They had excursions of all kinds, of course.

"I shall take you to the Up Park Camp," said one lady.

That was glorious. She took them the afternoon the regimental band played, when the black soldiers were there, in their white turbans, and their uniform like Algerians or Zouaves.

"I shall take you to the Creole Saw Mills," said another lady.

That was glorious, too. For the mills were worked by steam; and the children saw the wood (or lumber) sliced into planks and shingles, with only the creoles to look after the machinery, and without any saws to "hish" backwards and forwards at all.

"I shall take you to where there used to be slave markets," said a third lady.

There was some pity mixed with the glory of that. For the lady showed the children where there had been the Vendue Mart (which their French told them, although they knew so little, came from *vendu*, sold), the railed-off place or platform where negroes and negresses stood whilst planters felt whether they were weak or strong, and decided whether they were worth as little as £20, or as much as £60 or £70; and Lee and Bee were grieved to think that men and women and children had ever been bought and sold in their own Jamaica; though when the lady told them that since 1838 every black hand in the West India Islands (or in any British possession) had been free, they were glad again, becoming as delighted as they had been all through.

In the same way, they were taken to the Palisadoes, a piece of ground planted with senna. They were taken to the Mico Free Schools, for little black and brown children whose parents could not afford to pay. They were taken —.

But there came an end to the places where they were taken. There came a time when Ernest seemed kinder than ever; when he was very hurried; going from the hotel to the Mail Company's Wharf and back again, and speaking to some American ladies on their way to England, and going to the wharf again, and bringing back the stewardess, and seeing to luggage, and asking about more luggage, and sending the hotel negroes to this place, and sending them to others, all at once, so it seemed, and yet lasting all day long. There came a time when he drew his sisters to him, and spoke very seriously.

"You are going in the steamer alone," he said. "I cannot leave Blue Mountain View to go with you; for I am the master now, and we were nearly ruined by the storm, so I must stay to make things better. And I am not going to send a servant with you. I thought I would, at first, but a black woman would be an especial trouble to your Aunt Carly, and there would be the trouble of sending her back. The captain says, too, I may trust the stewardess. He has his wife with him this voyage, these American friends here will be very kind to you; and so I am going to venture. Are you afraid?"

It was not likely—just then; in all that novelty and petting. Was there not more to be seen? in the ship, in the sailors, in their berth, in the saloon, in the captain, in the captain's wife, in the mails, in the cargo, in the sea, and the sails, and the gulls, and the ports,—to all of which the children had heard allusions, vaguely, though they didn't in reality know much about them,—were there not "six bells," and compasses, and watches, and engines, and bunting, and yarns, and everything? And was not every new item of it like a fairy story?

"May we go on board now?" was the little girls' only answer to Ernest's question, therefore.

Ernest thought it was well they should, as a preparation. "On with your hats, then," he said. "We'll go."

They were coaling the ship, they found, when they got to her. That was the meaning of all the exciting bustle. Those negresses were the coalers, Ernest told the children; they were carrying the coal in those baskets on their heads, and would soon get it all on board. Each had a number; it was fastened to her, tied on her chest,—they could see it; all formed in line, stepping up and along regularly; and as each woman passed that negro there, he dropped a maize grain into a box numbered like the woman was numbered, calling it aloud; and then it was known how many loads each one had carried in and shot down.

"Will they go without us?" cried Lee, quite afraid of being left behind.

"We'll go on board for fear they do," said Ernest, smiling.

Surely, delights would never cease! There was the deck; there was the upper deck; there was the galley; there was the

steward's pantry—all the egg-cups made with little holes through them, and skewered on sticks right through ; there were the pens for the cows, and the sheep, and the fowls, alive now, but which would soon be turned into provisions ; there were the cabin stairs, with their bright brass clips ; there was the state-room, with swing lamps, with a piano, with all the little berths opening into it out of little doors, with the children's own ! They couldn't go away that minute ! Ernest must let them stay a little longer ! Look at the sailors' tattooed hands ! Look at the sailors' bare red throats ! Look at this passenger's dog, pulling at its chain ! Look at the masts ! Look at the ropes ! Look at the dog-vane !

This excitement, or this enjoyment, lasted. It was there when the moment of parting came ; when Ernest told his sisters that when the steamer arrived at Plymouth a servant would be there to meet them, sent by Aunt Carly, who would take them down to Hayle. It was there when Ernest told them to do always what was right and good and true ; when he spoke so very gently, and his face had such a serious look ; when he stepped off the ship ; when the ship left her moorings,—amidst musical “ya-hoys,” and the rattling of chains, and the puff of the steam, and loud orders, and much of hurried clambering over the ship's sides, and of last words, and hand-wavings, and tears. It was there when Jamaica, with her rugged sides, her noble mountains, her splendid trees, her torn clefts and headlands, had sunk into a pale faint outline, and at last had faded quite away ; and it made the little Casserlys the playthings of the ship, as they had been the playthings at their home, with only liveliness and fun coming from them, and being given to them, wherever they went.

They were not sea-sick, not they. They could eat all day long ;—at the proper meals in the saloon,—breakfast, tiffin, dinner ; at any intermediate times when the captain's wife or some of the ladies gave them biscuits and other “nicies” out of their private stores. They could laugh, and dance, and jump, and sing. They could be the passengers' little messengers from one to another, or for anything that was required ; running for parasol, or book, or shawl ; telling that somebody's folding chair was to be put here, somebody's wraps carried away. They could listen to

the funny Yankee gentleman's funny stories, repeating these stories with their queer misunderstandings of them, and making them funnier than before. They were on the quarter-deck, up one little set of stairs, across it, and down the other; they were on the main-deck; they were taking possession of the cutter; they were in the forksle (for they soon learnt to call it so, and to think very meanly of folks who drawled out "fore-castle"); they were in the saloon; they were seeing allowances paid out; they were in the captain's own little cabin chatting with his wife; they were up on deck with her, being coaxed by her to take so many regulated turns without scampering away; and their hair was being blown straight back by the wind; their skin was getting tanned, healthily, and they were as at home in the last place as in the first, and in the first as in the last. Sea-language, sea-manners, sea-difficulties, were familiar to them at once.

"Shark-steaks, forrard," they would be told, which did not seem at all to them like Ivano Fonseca's Royal Bossese, although to most people it might sound so. They knew that the crew, *foreward*,—which was "forrard,"—were going to have shark-steaks served out to them, and they ran away to see the curiosity.

"Paddy's ready for ducks," they would be told, and they ran for that; "Paddy" being the Indian for rice, and it being quite a business of theirs to see the ducks fed.

"Porpoise steaks, sliced dolphin, and bonita," got whispered to them somehow, by some rough voice which softened itself as every voice became softened in speaking to them, and which was just hurried out in comic invitation as they were romping by. The cook's galley would be besieged by the little girls at this directly; they would peep in to see him slice up all these queer fishes; he would tell them he should be making chowder in a day or two, and they would make him promise they should see him do it with some other capital sailors' dishes called Twice Laid and Sea Pie.

"Will you learn to make reef-knots?" was another invitation.

"Of course."

"That's you," by which the great old sailor meant that the little girls had made the reef-knot properly, after watching *him do it, and trying two or three times badly, and then trying again and doing it right.*

"And now Jack Tar will show you a clove-hitch."

As Jack Tar did. Other Jack Tars, and this one again, teaching Lee and Bee the difference, at different times and again, between an ensign, a jack, a blue peter, a pennant; making them learn about starboard and port; about the weather-side, a reef, a yard-arm, the clew, the bunt-whip, the gaskets, top-sails, grummels, cringles; and though perhaps Lee and Bee did not learn all this "sea-lingo" perfectly, they learnt some of it, and they made the sailors happy, and the sailors made them happy, all in an innocent way, and that was doing a great deal after all.

The funny Yankee gentleman, however, taught them something quite properly. It was so easy, they could not help learning it.

"You Jamaica-piccaninnies, come here," he said, as he lounged back in his folding-chair, after having had it carried for him into a nice place out of the wind and the sun, under the awning. "I feel like handing you out a moral lesson. Come!"

The little girls were with him in a moment. He was so kind under that strange languid way of his,—his eyes had such a merry look in them,—now and then,—he always seemed to have so much more to say than he did say, that the children were quite fond of him. If they were clambering too high, also, and might have fallen,—if they were just in some dangerous place when the ship gave a lurch, and they might have been even flung into the sea,—this American, with his sharp look, always seemed to be the first to see their danger, and the one to take them out of it with his long arms. Added to which, he could always explain everything to them about the engines; he seemed to have an inexhaustible stock of American candy, of other capital nice things he called cocoa-nut cookies, Brother Jonathan, Silver-cake, and Indian Pone; and so Lee and Bee were glad he called, and were not likely to keep him waiting.

"Explain a moral lesson," he said, with one of his slender hands on Lee's shoulder, Lee being next to him.

Lee laughed. "Can't," she said.

"Explain cocoa-nut cookie, then."

"Nice things don't want to be explained." And when Lee had cried this out saucily, she and Bee held out their hands,

for their friend was laughing heartily, and was producing some of his accustomed treasures.

"Now Beetie," he said, whilst the children were enjoying what he gave them, and wondering whether they should eat it all then or put some of it away, "the moral lesson will have to come from you. Explain it."

"Can't," said Bee, copying Lee, since she could think of nothing better.

"Nor I, altogether," said the gentleman, in his strange way; as though he were talking to somebody else, and the children were not there. "But, youngsters," he said, looking into their tanned faces brightly, exactly as if he had taken hold of his mind, and pulled it back again, recollecting what he had called them for. "Look ye, I can tell you something that you can think of when you hear about moral lessons and sermons, and other big things that are sometimes disagreeable. It will do for them all, for it is all of them rolled up into a very little bundle. The first—and write every one in big letters, mind you, in your heads, and, if you can, in your hearts:—'Look up, not down.'"

The children's eyes involuntarily went with his, towards the sky; went with his, down to the deck.

"The second:—'Look out, not in.'"

The children's eyes went afar there, right to where the sea and the sky met, miles and miles and miles off; and then back, just to that little bit of self, beating and living, behind each little frock.

"The third:—'Look forward, not behind.'"

The children looked the way of the ship's course, as the gentleman pointed; looked to the ship's track, that the ship had left, with its long narrow line of beautiful bubbling wave and foam. For that was as much as they could understand then of what was intended.

"The last:—'Lend a hand.'"

There was no pointing over this, so the children's eyes were not led away; they were fixed on the gentleman's face. Nobody, they knew, could point to "lending a hand." It was a kindness that was to be there whenever it was wanted to be there; and it might be one thing, and it might be another *thing*, and it might come at any moment.

"Well," said the gentleman, with a smile, "if you can remember those four things, you will remember something that is in a book. I read them in a book. A book written by Dr Hale."

"Are you Dr Hale?"

It was quite funny to see the gentleman's smile then; Leonora was so inquisitive. "No," he cried, "no."

"Then if your name is not Dr Hale," Leonora brought out, "what is it?"

"Hail Columbia!" cried the gentleman, laughing aloud. "You may call me Hail Columbia. And whenever you hear that name, recollect my moral lesson."

The children quite thought the gentleman was in earnest; and they called him Mr Hail Columbia from that moment.

"Now," he would say, "before I give you this piece of Boston nut-cake, repeat me my four rules."

It might be Lee's turn, it might be Bee's turn; but whichever spoke, this was always the answer:—"Look up, not down. Look out, not in. Look forward, not backward. And, Lend a hand. Thank you, Mr Hail Columbia; much obliged." When, off the children would run to the occupation they had been called from, all the happier for having been called.

Altogether, the children learnt a great many things during their three weeks' voyage. They learnt a song an English lady, returning to England from the Brazils, sang to her baby. This was it:—

Baby hold his pretty thumb, straight, and stiff, and high;
Baby move his fingers then, like the birdies fly;
Baby move the middle one, Babe say "How de do,"
Baby move the next, and the little finger too.
Little finger, little finger, tucked in the fist,
Turn the pretty hands, in a pretty little twist.

They learnt that ships will speak to one another when they meet, by signals, asking what news, and getting news, in return. They learnt that sometimes, by a sudden lurch, all the plates and dishes on the saloon table would be swept from one end to the other. They learnt that church-time was kept on board just the same as on shore; and that it was very pretty to see everybody assembled, and to hear the service

gone through. They learnt that poor fellows, called "stow-aways," would hide themselves on ships when the ships were in port, because they wanted to go where the ships were going, and had no money to pay their passage. They learnt that this place, at which they stayed a few hours, was Port-au-Prince, and that it was great fun to see the little boats rowing round them as they stayed, with people in the boats trying to sell the passengers baskets and little curiosities, and fresh juicy fruit. They learnt that this other place from which Mr Hail Columbia brought them back some rich purple grapes, was St Thomas. And at last they learnt that England would soon be sighted, for that this was the Bay of Biscay, and this the English Channel; and that now—yes, it was quite true—they might take just one moment's peep, each, through Mr Hail Columbia's telescope, to see it for themselves,—their voyage would soon be over now, for England was there.

It was very small yet, for all that; a mere dark line. It was very difficult for the little Casserlys to attach any meaning to the news. For nothing seemed different to what it had seemed before. Here was the Brazil baby, with his crow and coo; here was the sleek cinnamon-coloured cow, in her cow-house, looking on so patiently, and giving such a funny flip with her tail; here were two or three ducks and fowls left in their coops, though certainly their companions were gone; here was the steward's pantry, as bright and orderly as ever, and the man putting suet into one end of his chopping-machine, and getting it paid out in a smooth continuous coil at the other, for the dinner that would be by and by; and did nothing change more than that when people were getting near to England?

"Lee," said Bee, bringing this thought out in her own way, "we don't seem nearer to Aunt Carly than we were before. I don't feel her yet, do you?"

Poor little Beatrice! She had thought, and Leonora had thought, that as they came near Aunt Carly, everything would tell them of it. Once and again during the voyage, the fact that they were going to her had come across them; and they had spoken of it to each other, with some talk of their poor mamma and papa, and some cry that they wished they could see Ernest. But they had brushed their tears away;



"Rain began to spatter, rain fell heavily. Ships were ranged in close lines, as closely as they would go."—Page 56.

thinking England was a great distance off, and that it would be time enough to fret, when the skies turned colour, when the sea became another sea, when the air was quite a different sort of air, when that deep, wide, mysterious something came that would tell them they were cut off from Golden Edge and Blue Mountain View and Jamaica, and tell them they were in that wonderful England, with Cornwall in it, and Hayle, and Little Dene, and cross Aunt Carly. And now, there was no mysterious something. One wave was like another wave. The wind was the same wind ; still lifting up their hair and making their ribands flutter ; still making them hold on to rope or rail or hatchway, for fear they should lose their footing, and be sent a long slide to the other end.

"You Jamaica piccaninnies will soon be ashore," said Mr Hail Columbia. "We shall never meet again ; but you'll remember what I told you, won't you ?"

"You little girls will be with your auntie very quickly," said the kind English lady, with her baby. "And so shall I be with mine. There is my baby, in nurse's arms. Go and give him a last kiss."

"We shall write to Mr Casserly to tell him you are safely landed," said the American ladies who had been at Kingston. "We shall send by this mail, you may tell Miss Brydie."

"We shall look for you to go back with us," said the captain's wife, "when you have grown fine young ladies. Make the best haste you can at it."

Everybody had something to say. And everybody said it in his or her own manner. There came a change at last, however. The ship no longer tossed and tumbled ; it went quietly along. Land was on both sides of it. Beautiful little yachts and other pleasure-boats were skimming about ; and grey sea-gulls were flying to the masts, and off again ; and buoys were bobbing up and down ; and wide stretches of green meadow were seen ; and there came houses, and houses, and houses, one above the other, up and up, without ending. So, too, the sky changed. It grew grey ; it grew thick ; rain began to spatter, rain fell heavily. Ships were *ranged in close lines*, as closely as they would go ; ships that *were all masts and yard-arms*, with their sails furled ; wharves *and mooring-places* were amidst these, with small rowing-boats

putting off from them, quickly, to save the bad weather ; and where there was a passage clear between all this, the water was slow and black, making the gulls, as they flew down to look quite white.

And this was the first peep little Leonora and Beatrice Casserly had of Old England.

CHAPTER V.

HOW THE NEW LIFE BEGAN.

"Marg the Mite Maroo-on !"

Shrill and full this woke little Leonora Casserly so suddenly, the first morning the children were at Little Dene, that the start she gave woke Beatrice as well.

"Did you hear it, Bee?"

"Shall we"—and Beatrice did not get any farther. She did not know why she was speaking, or what she was speaking about, she had been so fast asleep an instant before. She only took to rubbing her eyes, and was just beginning to be certain of one thing,—that she was in the midst of daylight.

"It seemed to speak just like our dear old Golden Edge cockie," said Leonora, nearly in a cry. "And cockies shouldn't all speak alike ; it's unkind. A ship-cockie"—when Leonora stopped, as if she all at once understood something that gave her great pain. "Oh, Bee ! Bee !" she exclaimed, "we're not on the ship ! we're in England, and this is Aunt Carly's house, and it is Little Dene !"

Bee lifted herself up half-way,—put her head out to where she could see a long strip of carpet, a distant chest of drawers, some chairs a wide way apart,—looked up, sharply, to see a lofty ceiling, a broad straight window, with the blind down, with curtains at the side, with loopings at the top, and tassels, and fringe, and all sorts of stiff heavy finery, and she threw herself back, as she and Leonora, each of them, broke into a pitiful burst of tears.

It was true. They were not lying, one on a little narrow shelf above, and the other on a little narrow shelf under, in their queer ship's berth. They could not hear the "pump-

swash, pump-swash, pump-swash" of the ship's engines, nor the toss and ripple of the waves against the ship's sides. There was no stewardess to come to tell them pleasantly, in sea-talk, that they must "turn out," or, still in sea-talk, that they might "turn in." There was no funny little round port-hole, with its funny little round hinged window, right at their elbows, through which they could look out on to sea, and sea, and nothing but the sea, and through which they could feel that hungry sea-air. Neither had they all their clothes, and towels, and brushes, and bags, hung up on nails all round, because to lay them, without hanging, would mean that they would slide this way and slide that, just as the ship slid, and might perhaps jerk on to their bedding, and on to them, with a good hard bump. They had not the ceiling of their cabin almost flat down on to their top shelf, and the floor of their cabin almost even with their bottom shelf, and the walls of their cabin so close it was nothing but a cupboard, and they used to say sometimes that they themselves were only jugs or basins (only they said "mess-cans" and "mess-kids," to be like the sailors) put away in it to dry.

"No—no—no," as Leonora sobbed out; "we can't go to the Jack Tars any more, or up and down those dear saloon stairs. We shan't hear the speaking-trumpet, or the six-bells, the four-bells, or any bells. We can't make believe any more that we're the captains of the cutter, and that if people want to get into her, they must touch their hats to us, and ask our leave."

The change was a sharp change indeed; and down the little girls' tears fell.

"Where's the baby, I wonder?" sobbed Bee. "And have all the sailors and mates and engine-men gone home to their little boys?"

"And the poll-parrot," said Leonora, "that John Jones was taking for his mother? And Nell, the dog? And those shell pagodas; and that flower-pot full of plants that the widow lady was carrying home from her husband's grave?"

Sorrow came with every bit of recollection; and then there seemed to be nothing more to recollect for a minute or two, and the children lay still.

"*Lee,*" said Bee at last, though, "I wonder whether it's morning, and what we are to do."

It was a capital wonder, because it made Leonora think. There they were, in a strange room, in a strange house, in a strange land, amongst all strange people. They did not know the shape and make of the house ; they did not know whereabouts in it their room stood ; they did not know whether Aunt Carly and the servants were lying near to them or far away ; they did not even know what o'clock it was, nor whether people began their days in England with drinking coffee, or with eating fruit, or with going out into the sugar-plant——

Ah, yes, they knew there were no sugar-plantations in England. They had heard their mamma and everybody else say so. They had had one breakfast in England, too—a breakfast at the hotel at Plymouth. Penwood, their aunt's man, who had come down to the steamer at the landing-stage, had taken them there, because it was dark and raining when the steamer was moored, and not well to take the night train on ; and as the captain's wife was landing also (instead of going the round to Cherbourg and Southampton, as the steamer itself was bound to go), she had said that she was going to the hotel, and it was best the children should accompany her. But then that breakfast had seemed like a steamer breakfast, quite. It is true it had been in a room—the ladies' coffee-room—that was much larger than the steamer saloon ; it is true that the room had had a great many small square tables about it, instead of one long wide table right down the centre. It is true that three or four white men-servants in black coats had brought in the dishes, instead of black servants in white calico coats, as the little girls were used to in Jamaica, or instead of the ship's stewards who had looked half like sailors. So it was true that the coffee-room had stood still, instead of swaying up and down ; and that each table in it was made to look very pretty with a bunch of fresh sweet-smelling flowers, which the table in the saloon, or the state-cabin—either name will do—never could have been. Still, besides the captain's wife, some of the American ladies were there ; and they had all kissed Lee and Bee, and chatted to one another, as one came in, and as another came in, about how Mr Hail Columbia had taken the night express to London, about how *this passenger had just started north*, and this was going to *the Isle of Wight*, and so forth ; and (especially as the little

girls had not again seen Penwood, who had had no occasion to come up to them till he came to tell them he should soon be ready to start) this breakfast had seemed as one more little bit belonging to the voyage; and how could Jamaica children tell that English people began their days with such a meal, or did not begin their days with such a meal, when English people were in their own English homes, really on the land, and not half-way on a quay and a pier, as much in the water almost as out of it?

Altogether, Bee put her little wonder again.

"Lee!" she said, frettingly, for Lee's thinking seemed to be such a very long thinking; "I wonder whether it's morning, and I wonder what we are to do!"

Lee could not tell; that is the truth. Nobody had told them, over night. Nobody had said, "Now, dearies, you must feel strange after your voyage, in this strange place, amongst all us strangers. And everything must be going up and down. So lie still in the morning till I call you; and feel quite happy and sure." No, nobody had been half so pitying as that to them, or half so comforting. They had been brought by Penwood in the train (and certainly a railway was lovely, going along the beach, and over bay bridges, and past hills, and right into towns and out again); they had been brought by Penwood from the station in a bus, as he called it; the bus had seemed to go a long way in the dark, and when it had stopped, there had been a gate, with a woman servant at it, who had a lantern, and lighted them up what she said was a garden path, till they had come to a porch, with stone pillars at two sides of it, and they knew they were at Little Dene. This woman had been kind enough, only with a queer, rough kind of English which the children could scarcely understand; so had a second servant been kind enough, who was waiting in the hall (Rebecca was her name, whilst the first was Rachel). These two had taken off the children's wraps, had given them some tea (made into a big tea, by what the servants called some Cornish pasty); they had unfastened the little packages of night clothes and other necessities the children had brought from the ship, telling *them that Penwood would see to all the big luggage in the morning, telling them also that their aunt had been unex-*

pectedly sent for to a neighbour who was very ill, and that, therefore, they would not see her till next day ; and then, one of the two, Rebecca, had taken the children upstairs again to their bedroom, had helped them into bed, pulling down the blind, and putting out the candle ; and, at last, with more of a stare and a puzzle than anything else, she had left them. So, let little Lee Casserly think, and think, and think again, she had not an answer for Bee that was worth calling an answer. The whole thing seemed—as they would have said, if they had been happier—like a table without any top, that had no legs, and like a book without any cover that had no pages. Yet something would have to be done. People, although they might be Jamaica people, and Jamaica very little and very unhappy people, could not stay in a strange bed, in a strange room, in a strange house, and stay there for ever, never doing anything. And this thought, being such a true thought, got so strong in the end with Leonora, it made her make a suggestion.

“Bee,” it was, “shall we get out of bed, and peep out of the window?”

Bee considered. The bed was warm. When she had half sat up before, the air had seemed to rush into her nostrils, and into her throat, with a chilly feeling that had not been at all pleasant. She was certainly trembling with her sobs, too, and not much inclined to exploration. Any sudden enterprise, at any rate, did not seem to her to be very desirable.

“What do you think there is to see?” she asked, to gain time, and still half in tears. “What will there be there?”

Of course, Leonora could not say, to a certainty, she could only imagine. “Well,” she said, “mamma used to talk about the primroses and the violets, about daffodils and Christmas holly, about blackberry bushes and Cornish pilchards, and Cornish mines with lead and copper, and all the great Hayle Foundry. Suppose we were to see a daffodil tree, and a blackberry bush climbing all over the house, and children catching pilchards in a pond, and the lead and copper lying along the roads, nicely polished, and making them sparkle?”

It sounded tempting, undoubtedly ; only Beatrice thought she *would like to consider* a little longer.

“Do you think,” she said, “the primrose branches will have

grown right round this window, so that we may pick some of the flowers?"

"Very likely," answered Leonora. "And St Erth is very near here, I know, on purpose to take care of Land's End; and perhaps we shall see all of it together."

"I should like to gather violets some day," said Beatrice, not yet having quite resolution enough to jump up, "if I thought I could gather them without pricking my fingers."

"But was it the violets that pricked?" asked Leonora. "I think mamma said it was the primroses."

"Well, it doesn't matter," Beatrice decided. "When we see them we shall know. And I wonder which we shall see first, and whether we shall know which it is?"

Lee was sure she should know some of the things, if she didn't know them all; and again suggested that they should just pop out of bed, and pull up one corner of the blind and peep out.

"Very well," said Bee. "Let us, then."

But they were very shy, as they crept softly from under the clothing, for all that they were alone. When they put their little feet down, too, the carpet felt very cold, and it was strange to have so much of it to tread upon, and to have been able to have got out on to it, one from one side of the bed, and one from the other. If they had been on the ship, they would have made a jump out, one almost on the other's head; they would have been both, for sure, greatly in one another's way, and both goaded on to give two or three deep digs to the other, with a testy elbow, before a minute had gone by. Now they seemed to have quite a long way to walk; whatever made an English bed so long? why was the air so—so—u-u-u-ugh! so shuddery? why——

But the children forgot they were shivering, for a moment, when they caught sight of the fireplace, and ran to it.

"What a funny thing!" cried Bee.

"Look at all this green and white paper pierced into pretty holes," cried Lee; "and these little bits of golden twinkly-twankly stuff hanging down all over it!"

"Here's this pretty little iron railing close to the ground, too," said Bee. "U-u-u-ugh! it's very cold, though, if your toe touches it. And here's an iron stick and an iron spade——

such a pretty one ! and two iron sticks tied together at the top ! ”

“ Yes,” said Lee, knowing all about it ; “ they have their fires in this ; and they light that paper, you know, and then that makes a blaze. Come on.”

Bee was coming, only something else stopped her.

“ Whatev—er’s this ? ” she cried. Lee ! look ! do ! ”

Lee, knowing so much as she did, spoke with confidence. “ It’s a dressing-table,” she said, giving the lace drapery that was hanging before her quite a little toss. “ People in England always have these mosquito-nets round their bedroom tables ; mamma told me so. It’s a remnant of their ancestry, or else it had something to do with the invasion of the Spains. I forget.”

The window was then reached ; the stiff linen blind, with the wooden lath in it, was slowly raised ; and—the children were so disappointed.

There was some kind of stone balustrade, just a few feet away from them. There were two stone vases perched upon this balustrade at distances, and filled with geraniums in flower, and then there was a high grass bank close behind that, holding some large round laurel bushes going higher than itself, and everything else was blocked right out.

“ Um ! ” went Leonora, meaning ever so much disapproval. “ Let’s get into bed again ! ”

As they did ; with the bed so comfortable, and the clothes so comfortable, and with everything getting so pleasantly warm as soon as their shivering was over, that they did not speak any more, and they shut their eyes, and began to feel drowsy, and grew to feel drowsier,—for it was only really about five o’clock,—and soon had their little curly heads low down in the pillows, and were fast asleep.

“ *Marg, the Mite Maroo-oo-on !* ”

It seemed almost the same thing again, for the start that Leonora gave, and for the waking her start brought to little Beatrice. Yet it was different, too ; because when the pair of children had opened each a pair of eyes, as well as there being the tiresome old cock to grumble at, there was Rachel, the Little Dene housemaid, coming in at the door.

She was something so strange compared with Negress

Nursie! She had not a yellow pocket-handkerchief twisted round her head into a turban; she had not some bright-red twilly cottony stuff that was a petticoat or something; and some soft white twilly stuff that was a neckerchief or something. She wore a high-up white cap that had a bow of ribbon; she wore a pale print dress, that had its sleeves rolled a long way up; and she seemed to be made into about the height and the roundness of a bolster (supposing a bolster could have walked about), by a brown-white linen apron tied tight all round her, and beginning at the front just under her chin. This did not make her ugly; indeed she looked very neat and clean. It was only that it made her queer, and that Lee and Bee felt very strange with her.

It was time for them to get up, she said. Her mistress had told her to come and tell them so. She was to help them to dress, if they wanted her to help them this first day; but they were not to be helped for the future, so perhaps would like to begin now, as they would have to go on. There was some hot water, for this first day; but afterwards, they were to wash in cold; her mistress always did. Those were the towels, and here was the soap, and those were their sponges; and——

"Oh dear!" she broke out, giving the children a respectful kind of hug, "it must be main hard to come from foreign parts, and to be orphans, and to be buried alive out here in this—oh, this—dreary Little Dene, with no one to love 'ee!"

"But there,"—and she drew herself up again,—"it's my part to do all such as my mistress tells me to do. For my mistress is my mistress; and since, here I am, I must obey her."

She went on, therefore, with her enumeration, as if she had never left it off. She had not brought their boots, because Penwood always cleaned the boots, and he was not bound to come every morning before breakfast, and he hadn't come to-day, most likely because yesterday's long journey had put him out; but they could put on these thinner things she had found in their packages, till Penwood came. These cashmere-looking, soft sort of boots looked the biggest, so she should put them down at this chair, this side; and these high-low sort of things looked the smallest, so she should put them *down on the other*. And she should go away now as they *said they could manage* to dress themselves—her mistress had

told her to ; and if, when they were dressed, they did not know where to find the breakfast-room, she would most likely be outside dusting or something, and she would show them.

"Bee," cried Leonora, the instant she had shut the door, "I hate her !"

Bee was a little bit surprised. "But she kissed us kind," she said.

"Oh yes," said Leonora. "I don't mean Rachel. I mean Aunt Carly. I hate her."

So did Beatrice, with capital letters all through the word, just like Leonora, she was so certain about it. It is not to be supposed they knew what *to hate* meant, though. They were only feeling odd, and strange, and peculiar, and uncomfortable, and sad, and miserable, and unhappy, and put out, and so many other sorrowful and fearful things which came across them whilst they were going through their melancholy dressing, that Bee was forced by it all, not to cry, but to burst out laughing.

"Carly Charley, Sugar Barley," she cried. "That's what I shall call her, to make her savage !"

"And as she's Miss Brydie," said Leonora, trying, since she was the elder, to say something cleverer than Beatrice had said, "I shall say Brydie Friday, keep it tidy !"

They felt quite sure their aunt would be dreadfully aggravated ; and they tried to think of something else to make it more.

"Let us say," said Bee, "Dene, Dene, a Cornwall Queen !"

"Yes," said Lee, "and Little, Little, Not a Tittle !"

They went on putting on their clothes, quite comforted ; they did a certain amount of washing (and a very great deal of splashing !) with the warm water ; and then it came to combing out their hair.

It was a dreadful trouble to Beatrice.

"Bother !" she said, giving a pull, and another pull, and after all sticking fast at a tangle. "Why are combs made so silly that they won't go through !"

Leonora's was going through nicely, because she was taking a little piece of her hair at a time, and was not in such a *perverse bustle* ; so she was able to speak quite grandly to her *impatient little sister*. "Do what I do," she said. "This way."

Beatrice tried, and Beatrice succeeded very fairly ; only, growing headstrong and "harum-scarum" again when she was going to hook on her hair-riband, she gave it such a tug she broke the end off to which the eye was sewn, so of course she couldn't hook it on at all.

"Oh glori !
Missie Lenore !"

was what Margo the maroon used to say, with her large eyes large opened, when anything absurd happened at Golden Edge ; and that is what Bee said then, full of merriment.

"Haven't got another," she added. "I shall have to go downstairs without !"

Yes, that was true ; and it was no use for Leonora, however much older she might be, to think of any other plan. Because, even if the two together had known where Aunt Carly kept needle and thread up in that long bedroom,—if she did keep any there,—they certainly did not know how to use it. With nurse, and with mamma, up at Golden Edge, they had never sewn anything on, or tucked anything up, or tacked anything in ; they didn't know anything about a ruck and a pucker ; and, very probably, if they had been asked, they would have said (as boys say) that the right way to get a button-hole is to slit one with a penknife wherever one is wanted, and that the right way to get rid of a torn place is to gather up the edges of it and tie them round tightly into a little knobble with a string.

"All right. Go down without," said Leonora. "Mine is getting hooked, though ; and now it's on nicely."

There only remained the frocks and the pinafores to be put on ; there only remained the little prayers to be said ; and then the little children went together to the door of their room, as the first step towards seeing their Aunt Carly.

"I hope Rachel will be there !" Bee whispered. "I—I—am afraid !"

Rachel was there. She was bustling about kindly with a duster ; dusting door-ledges, and dusting skirting-tops, and flipping at the fine grooves of a large picture frame hanging on the staircase ; she was doing this, over and over again, on purpose to have some excuse for being there when the children came out ; and, going first, as soon as she saw them, she went



“And which of you is Leonora and which of you is Beatrice?” she asked, looking down like a big black cloud.—Page 68.

down some stairs that were smelling beautifully from a pot of lemon-scented verbenas standing in a niche in the wall ; and going across the hall, she opened a door, and stood back, that the children might go in.

Oh dear ! The moment had come. Aunt Carly was there ; and Aunt Carly was simply—awful. She was as tall as a man ; she was as dark, and as straight, and as thin, and as upright, as an iron column ; she had a straight cape straight round her straight shoulders ; she had straight cuffs at the end of her straight sleeves ; she had a straight collar round her straight neck ; and all over her head was a sort of muslin handkerchief, drawn tightly to it, and tied under her chin. All this would not have mattered ; for perhaps she did have a cap somewhere that was like a cap, and perhaps she did have a dress somewhere that might have a scrap of trimming on it ; only her face was long, and dark, and thin, and straight also, it had the severest look, quite a frown, and when she spoke, her voice seemed to threaten and frighten, so as to match her frown exactly.

“And which of you is Leonora ? and which of you is Beatrice ?” she asked, looking down like a big black cloud.

Could they caper and dance, and tormentingly bring out, “Carly Charley, Sugar Barley,” or “Brydie Friday, keep it Tidy,” to *that* ? No, indeed ! They could only feel their hearts sink—sink—sink—right through the floor ; they could only stand just where they had entered, Leonora stiff-still, and poor Bee folding her hands like a little criminal, her head bent down on to her chest, low.

“I—I—am Lee,” faltered out Leonora ; “and—and—that one is Bee.”

“You are *what* ? and she is *what* ?” cried Miss Brydie, holding herself up, terribly grim.

Leonora scarcely knew what to say. It seemed so dreadful not to be known ; to be asked if you were you, and not your sister ; and then when you had said you were you and your sitser was the other, it seemed so dreadful to find you had said what hadn’t said it, and you were asked again ! Leonora would have liked to cry ; the whole puzzle and muddle was so *heavy on her*. But she choked down her tears, and thought *‘e would try another way*.

"I am Leonora Casserly," she said; "and that is Beatrice Casserly."

"Ah," cried Miss Brydie, "now I understand. But you are not to let me have any of that Lee-Bee business, or Bee-Lee business, whichever it was, here, remember. I consider it most important that children should learn to call things by their proper names. It teaches them accuracy. So you will be Leonora, if you please, whilst you are at Little Dene; and Beatrice will be Beatrice. And now you may kiss me."

Ugh! Bee would have liked to have bitten her (she told Lee, afterwards); Lee would have liked to have run a needle into her (she told Bee, afterwards). Their Aunt Carly had a manner, however, which made everybody do what she told them, whether they liked it or not; the children accordingly approached her, she bent down to where they could reach, and the kisses were given.

"We shall go in to breakfast, now," said Miss Brydie. "We call this the dining-room, and you see no breakfast is laid here. It is always in that opposite parlour, which I call my morning-room. Come, now, for I daresay you are hungry."

CHAPTER VI.

HOW EVERYTHING GREW WORSE.

THE morning-room was right under the room in which the little girls had slept. They were sure of that, at once; because there, through the one window of it, was the stone balustrade, only nearer down, so that it could be seen that, behind it, there was another balustrade just like it, with stone steps, and a landing, from one to the other, in between. There, through the same one window, were the two stone vases, with their bright geraniums. There was the green bank, only it seemed such a very high green bank now, looked at from the ground. Lee and Bee could not see the top of it, and consequently could not see the laurels (or whatever shrubs they were) that were growing there. Cornwall, therefore, to these little Jamaica people, was not very large. They would not want a

map of it ; showing rivers, water-courses, lakes, bays, mountains, headlands, gulfs, chief towns, capitals, climate, commerce, products, and all the rest. No chief town could be in it ; no product.

Oh yes, there could. At least, the room had a product. It had two splendid, glorious, darling cats. One was as white as a snowstorm, the other as black as ebony ; both were smooth, sleek, fat, shiny, sleepy ; just half-shutting their solemn eyes, looking happier than kings, and as if all Cornwall belonged to them ; and round the white cat's neck there was a red collar, and round the black cat's neck a brass one.

"Oh !" was the joyful cry of both the children. They did not dare to let it come out though. They kept it inside of them. Much as they would have liked to have sprung at the cats, one to each, cuddling them, kissing them, making them their very own, they were too terrified at their aunt to do anything but stand there, stock still.

"Ah," she said, "you notice my cats, I see. No wonder, they are beauties. They would win prizes at a cat show, if I could spare them. But I can't, for nobody would understand them, and know their ways, and they would fret after me."

Would they. Well, perhaps cats—at least, English cats—might be silly. Lee and Bee were quite certain though, that Jamaica cats would not have fretted at such a thing at all. But they did not say that, either. They still simply stood stock still.

"Wouldn't you like to know the cats' names ?" asked Miss Brydie, with a kind of snap. "Most children like to know cats' names, and generally ask. I used to."

Leonora shut her eyes then, a moment, gave herself a shake, to shake all her courage up, and ventured to speak.

"I thought perhaps they might be Puss and Titsie."

"Absurd ! And who told you there were cats at Little Dene called Puss and Titsie ?"

"Mamma. She said they were kittens once, and they grew up, and were bigger, and bigger, and she used to love them, and you took them away."

Leonora only said this very timidly, and in very little pieces, and very low down ; so perhaps Miss Brydie (who was look-

ing over the table, sharply noticing whether everything was there) did not quite hear her. At any rate, she took no notice ; she only said a little more about that which she had called "absurd."

"Learn a piece of natural history," she snapped out. "The cats that were here when your mother was a little girl, are not here now. Cats don't live for ever."

"Do aunts live for ever?"

That was another of the things that Lee and Bee kept inside them. For not a sound came. They were merely just standing, as before.

"Lily is one of my cats," went on Miss Brydie. "Jet is the other. And bless me!" she cried all at once, tartly, "you can sit down! That's your chair, and that's yours, and keep them. Little girls, here, can have no squabbles and disputes."

"Wait!" she cried, as the children were just sliding themselves on to their seats, oh, so unhappily! "I had forgotten your bibs. Here are your bibs. Put them on."

Oh, goodness!

Nasty, oblong, black, shiny things, like dolls' trays hung up longways, with some horrible button and elastic at the back, to keep them close up! And here was Lee ten and a little, and here was Bee past nine!

"Put them on!" Aunt Carly was crying. "I had them made on purpose. Little girls, here, can't spoil their frocks and pinafores. And if you are thinking you can't fasten them for yourselves, Leonora you fasten your sister's, and then turn round, and Beatrice will fasten yours."

Oh dear! But the ceremony was performed; just as the children would have rolled their heads up in anti-macassars, or have taken off their boots and shoes to use them for butter-boats, if their Aunt Carly, on that first morning, had told them to. And there the children sat, side by side, looking at that stone balustrade, and that green bank, facing them through the window; and no children, surely, in England could have been more stiff, or more crushed and uncomfortable.

They were hungry, as Aunt Carly had said, and as might be supposed; so they were glad of the good cups of coffee she handed over to them, and of the nice bread and butter she passed, and the small slice each of cold tongue she gave them

as a relish. But, even if there had been anything on the table that struck them as curious, they had no heart to say it was curious ; they had no heart scarcely to know what it was that was put upon their plates, and that they put down their throats. When Aunt Carly told them, too, that they had finished breakfast, they didn't know that they had ; and when she said they might unbutton their bibs, and put on their thick boots, if the boots were ready, and their hats, and go in the garden to look about, they were still not quite alive enough to know what was happening to them, or who they were, or where they were, or anything.

There was this much, however. This was the porch or portico they had come through last night ; they could recognise that, after their boots and hats were on, and Rachel had unlocked and unbolted the great big front door, and let them out. This, to the right, was the path they had walked up ; for there, at the end, was the gate, and there was the road. This other way, to the left, led to the stone balustrades, and the stone stairs. Looking up, there were the tops of all sorts of twittering green trees ; some dark and bronzish, some like ever so many tufts of tiny feathers, some like little hanging hearts, all set to dangle and to tremble. Looking down, and going on to it, out of the portico, and off the gravel, was a great spread of delicious grass, as green as an emerald, as soft to the foot as moss. What was to be done ? Go forward, go back ? Go this way, or the other ? With the terrible change it was to be away from Jamaica, and away from the steamer, and to be here at Little Dene with Aunt Carly, Little Dene seemed to be a big sort of place after all, and might go miles here, and miles there, so that people might go on for days and days, and never be out of it !

"Lee !" said poor Beatrice, thinking all this. "I know what's out the other side there ! It's Land's End !"

That was horrible. Suppose they went to the edge of it, and tumbled over, and over, and over, and were lost for ever !

"We'll go the other way," said Leonora, quite resolved.

The other way was up the steps, and proved a very pretty way, leading to the bank, and up it, up to where the shrubs *were*, and a pretty bowered seat. It was pleasantly warm *there*, and *there* was quite an immense upper garden *there*,

which Lee and Bee could not understand then, although it simply meant that the Little Dene ground was hilly ground, and the steps built as a convenient and sightly way to get to the higher part of it. The garden held all sorts of things, when the children could see it. There were raspberries, though not yet quite ripe; there were currants and gooseberries, those not quite ripe either; on the walls, all trained out in such a strange, neat, straight way, were tomatoes, and plums, and apricots, and peaches, and apples and pears; all of which Lee and Bee knew quite well, though they had seen them growing in such a different fashion, and though they were still only hard and green, and would not be ready for eating for weeks. Down at the feet, still all spread out in such neat strange straight rows, were strawberry-plants; were narrow streaks or lines of thin fine onions; were streaks or lines of feathery carrots; were ever so many more things than Lee and Bee could take in, on that first look of theirs, and than there is any need to tell. It was Little Dene, and it was Aunt Carly's; they were at Little Dene, and were with Aunt Carly;—those facts were like a lump of lead at their hearts, were as if they carried lumps of lead upon their heads.

"Lee," said Bee, so pitiably. "Do you think we shall soon grow up?"

Lee might almost have been grown up already, she was so sedate. She gave what was really a real grown-up sigh. "Do you think we're to stop here all the time?" she said, with it, "or are we to go to school?"

Yes; that was the question. They did not know at all, yet, what was going to happen to them. In Jamaica, their brother had tried to keep them merry children, hiding all trouble from them, and had told them nothing; at Little Dene here, their aunt had seemed, all at once, magically, to make them much smaller children, and yet old people, hiding all pleasure from them, and had told them nothing, so far, either. And let them walk on by this neat trim box-edging, by these savoury patches of mint and sage, and marjoram, as long as they pleased, nothing would be told them there; for leaves could not speak,—for fruit-tree branches did not know *their language* (if they knew any language at all), and it was *quite certain* that the gravel-paths were deaf as well as dumb,

and, let them be ever so learned as to what had been, they could tell no secrets of what was to come, whatever.

The children, consequently, could only keep on surmising, and giving out unhappy little recollections and comments.

"I wish there had never been any wind in the world at all!" sighed Leonora, going slowly on, "and then it wouldn't have blown down our dear mamma and papa, and Golden Edge!"

Beatrice considered about it; she had a knack of considering. "Then," she asked thoughtfully, "shouldn't we have had to grow up? Might we have stayed as we are?"

Not quite that, of course; and Beatrice did not really think it was quite that. Only children sometimes like to say things, although they don't mean what they know the things will lead to. In a minute, also, Beatrice said something more, feeling it was a comforting suggestion in all this difficulty.

"Perhaps," it was, "if we went to school it might not be so very, very, very dreadfully bad? Perhaps we shouldn't have to wear—to wear—a bib!"

Lee suddenly flew into a temper—or out of it. "I'll—I'll," she said, not very certain of anything except that she hated Aunt Carly, "I'll cut my bib into fifty pieces!"

Beatrice meant as much; only, in her detestation, she toppled over on to the funny side. "Let us," she cried, and she could scarcely get her words out for the laugh that was behind them, "button them round Lily and Jet, the cats!"

It seemed to Leonora so comic, it made her give a kind of a gulp of a laugh as though it had been shot out of her against her will. It did not drive down her passion, however, or smooth out the angry look that was in her eyes.

"I shall call you Bee, mind you," she cried in a torrent, "and capital Bee, and double Bee, and a whole string of Bees, and all the Bees in the hive! I shan't care what she says! And I shall call her white cat Jet, and her black cat Lily, and I shall squabble and dispute, and I shall spoil my frock and pinafore, and I shall do anything I like!"

Beatrice, as before, meant just as much, only she brought it out in her own Bee-manner. "And I shall call you Lee," she declared, "and Casser-lee; and her, Aunt Car-lee; and Hayle, Hay-lee! And I shall call Rachel, Chel-ra; and Rebecca,

Becca-re ; and Penwood, Wood-pen ; and everything in Little Dene shall be turned topsy-turvy ! ”

Unhappily, this spirit lasted with the poor little girls. They were not bad children. They would not have told a lie ; they would not have stolen anything. They would not have deceived (which is telling a lie, only roundabout, instead of straight on) ; they would not have cheated (which is only another way of stealing by that way of getting hold of money or things which people do not mean you to get hold of). They would have been kind to everything in the world, except now and then for a little bit of mischief ! And even then they would have done the mischief with a roguish laugh, so that you would have known all about it. They would have helped everybody over everything there was to do, if they had known how to help ; and if people had only told them how, kindly, having patience till they understood. But they had not been checked, or curbed, or controlled—whichever word seems the easiest—in all their lives. When they had been inclined to play, people had let them play ; when they had been inclined to learn, people had let them learn. Nobody had said to them, “ Now then, I must have your learning now, and you may have your play after it ; ” for everybody had been so glad to see them play, and so glad to see that they were glad to play, that play had seemed to be the proper thing for them, and everybody thought that for a little time longer play might go on. Aunt Carly, however,—this great, grim, iron-like Miss Brydie,—saw the children all at once, without having had them in her arms as dear little fondled babies. Aunt Carly saw them all at once, knowing she was going to take care of them for years, and she thought she would begin by doing what she thought was right, no matter how much other people had been wrong ; and she showed herself, at the very first, to be stiff, and hard, and unbending, and severe. It was a pity. Because, if she had said to herself, “ I will begin by degrees ; I will be gentle for a day or two ; then a little hard ; then a little harder ; then harder and harder, till I am as hard as I require,” poor Leonora and Beatrice would have grown used to it, and would have gone straight on, perhaps, into learning *and propriety*, without knowing that the road to it had lumps *and bumps*, and might sometimes pitch them right out of the

saddle. Yet (as it can be seen, of course), Aunt Carly was quite right to want discipline. These children were to be changed from being babies into being big girls; and she would be obliged to use rules, and obliged to use regulations, rooting up the babyhood, and pointing always to the girlhood which stood a little further on. It was only unlucky that she set out on her journeywork the first minute, and did not let the little people have a little time to breathe.

"I—I," the children were made to cry from it, struggling to bring out something worse, but finding that nothing worse would come, "I hate her!"

Accordingly as time went on, Aunt Carly became what the children called Carli-er; the children became what she called rude, obstinate, and defiant.

"Why I have them, may surprise you," she used to say to her friends. "It is because as they have come, a new burden upon me—although not a money burden, I admit that; Ernest will send me an allowance for them—I have taken it. All my life, burdens of some sort have seemed to have been sent to me." (She did not know, poor Aunt Carly, that a burden is a burden if you make it so; but that, if you choose, you can turn it into a pleasant package.) "These children's mother was my burden once, and now, twenty years after her marriage delivered me from her, I have them in her place. And it shall be endured. Yes, humbly, as burdens ought to be endured. And I shall teach them myself at first, at any rate, for six months or so, till I see how little they really know, and how very rude and naughty they can be. Then I shall know best what sort of a school to send them to, or what sort of a governess to have to teach them here."

"You will learn writing, arithmetic, and geography, two days a week," was the order in which this lesson business was to be begun, so she told the children. "You will learn French, history, natural history, and the piano, two more days. You will learn drawing, dictation, grammar, and recitation on the remainder. These will occupy your mornings, when I shall be with you; in the afternoons you will have needlework, and practising, and some sums and exercises to do by yourselves, *and the evenings* you may play or read, or do what you like.

But I must have the lessons perfect, or else of evenings you will have to do them again."

Lee "made a face" at Bee, and Bee "made a face" at Lee, when they could do this without Aunt Carly seeing; Lee flashed out some anger at the arrangement, and Bee fired off some fun at it, when they could do it without Aunt Carly hearing.

"She doesn't know so much about some parts of geography as we do," cried Leonora, scornfully. "She hasn't seen St Catherine's, and Port Royal, and Santa Gloria. And she can't tell us anything about the Santa Cruz Mountains, and the Yallahs River, and Morant Bay."

"But look here, Lee," said Beatrice, enjoying it. "Here's some poetry I've made up. We'll write, and recite. We'll dictate on a slate. We'll speak French on the bench. We'll draw on the floor. Only that last isn't good, though! It'll want some altering."

"You are doing your lessons dreadfully," they were told by their aunt at the very beginning. "Your writing is wretched; your sums are all wrong; you can't find me a single place on the map."

Being called away from them as she was, a moment after, there came more explosions.

"She shouldn't put such queer tails to her g's, then. She shouldn't ask us, If three men do so much, what will four men do? She shouldn't point to Jamaica and say it's a British possession and a West India Island. It isn't; it's Jamaica."

"You've forgotten every fact in history that we have been reading," was another of Aunt Carly's complaints.

"She shouldn't tell us all about the Saxon Heptarchy, then, or Pragmatic Sanction, or the Bill of Rights," came the little girls' corresponding (but confidential) retort. "If she'd tell us all about dear little Prince Arthur, and the dear little boy-king Edward, and the dear little princes smothered in the Tower, we should listen."

"Your French exercises show you have not been paying the slightest attention," declared Aunt Carly. "Here is *un* for *une*, and *au* for *à la*, and *de* for *du*, and *mes* for *mon*, and this, and this, and this, altogether twenty-nine errors on this one page, and my C.B. put at the end of it, to prove it *has been examined*."

"Then take your *une* away to *la lune*, and take your *à la* and put it *au bas*, and take out your *du* for a walk in the *rue*, and as for the *mon*, it's a great deal too *bon*," went Lee and Bee when they were alone; one putting one thing, and one another, just as each thought of it; and the last sally, which happened to be Bee's, seeming to both so peculiarly funny, the laugh they gave at it made them for a moment almost happy.

They would purposely squeak their slate-pencils on their slates, put the wrong emphasis on words in their recitations, saying, "My name *is* Norval," "I come to bury *Cæsar*, not to praise him," and so on; they would dot the notes in their music that ought to have been straight notes; they would say Russia was next door to Prussia, and Norway was a doorway, and Scotland was a hotland, and Ireland was a fireland; they would ask why *owe* wasn't spelt *o*, saying they could have made much clearer English if they had been asked to, because they should have written *i* for *eye*, or else *meye* for *my*, or *seye* for *sigh*, they didn't care which, so long as everything was all alike and easy; they grew by little bit and little bit, in fact, so bold in their audacity, and so fearless of punishment, that Aunt Carly thought she must invent some new punishment to make them mind her.

They grew to enjoy mischief, too, because it was mischief that did harm to Aunt Carly; and they would not try to remedy it. For instance, they saw Lily, the white cat, upset some flower-pots off an ornamental shelf on the upper garden wall. They let the flower-pots lie.

"I daresay flowers grow best with their heads downwards at Little Dene," said Leonora.

For another instance. They saw Jet, the black cat, roll herself on a cluster of new green lilies; rubbing her head, hard and fast, into the sword-like leaves, snapping at her tail, with a snap that coiled her into a ring; then returning to her roll, and regularly roystering in the rub she gave of her back, with her feet kicking upwards, as a splendid finish off. They let her rub, and roll, and have her royster.

"Perhaps cats," Bee said, "do that always when they're the proper cats for a cats' show!"

They then saw Rachel carry off the wrong parcel, when she was told to walk behind her mistress to the draper's; they

saw Aunt Carly hold her book upside down, when she had forgotten to put on her spectacles ; they saw the little dog laugh, and the cat play the fiddle, and the moon jump over the cow, and the spoon clatter after the dish, or whatever the right deeds were that those funny creatures have been performing for centuries ; or, at least, if they had seen these things done, and they knew they would have been vexatious things to Aunt Carly, they would have helped to have got them done, and not have stopped them for love or money.

All the while, however, Aunt Carly saw this, although they thought they were doing it so naturally that the spirit in which they were doing it would never be discovered, and at last she hit upon the punishment that she was sure they would feel bitterly.

"You girls behave so badly together," she said, when they had been stumbling over the Falls of Dolore, as they would call it, instead of Lodore, "you behave, I may say, so shamefully together, that I shall separate you. You will meet at meals, and you will meet at lessons ; because then I shall be with you, and I shall see that there is no evil communication between you to corrupt good manners. But I have had another bedroom got ready for you, Beatrice, so that you will no longer sleep together ; and your exercise-time will be one in the afternoon and one in the evening, so that by no chance will you meet for talk or play. Indeed, I forbid a word to pass between you. And as you have driven me into this, take care you don't drive me into more."

Oh ! the cruelty of it, the aggravation ! It went like a dagger, and it quivered there, lacerating each young heart.

"Bee !" cried Leonora, springing to Beatrice, and "Lee !" cried Beatrice, holding her close.

It only made more severity. Were they not wrong even in those words ?

"Leonora ! Beatrice !" Aunt Carly cried, "I will have obedience !"

She did not get it, at the moment.

"Bee !" was Lee's cry still, in the full pain of her comprehension.

And "Lee !" went Beatrice, echoing her, with deep appeal.

"This confirms me !" declared Aunt Carly. "This is my prophecy fulfilled. Leonora ! come with me !"

But Bee clung the closer, and Lee held her, and Lee lifted up her face, full of fury.

"How dare you call me from my sister!" she cried. "How dare you say you will keep us apart!"

Alas! Aunt Carly could not only say, she could do. With one action, she had wrested the two children from each other's arms; she had Leonora firmly in her grasp, and hurried her out of the room.

"There!" she cried, returning to little Beatrice, who was sobbing and shaking with her grief. "Let that be a lesson to you! Your sister will learn her task in the dining-room where I have safely put her. You will remain here."

Neither Beatrice nor Aunt Carly remained there, however. A tremendous sound of crashing glass was heard, followed by the sharp shut of the conservatory doors. It made Aunt Carly rush out, with Beatrice after her,—it made her, Beatrice still following, rush on to the dining-room where a moment before she had left Leonora; and there,—oh! alas! alas!—as she and Beatrice reached it together, they saw there was no Leonora there, to threaten, or cling to, but they saw the immense chimney-glass, over the fire-place, behind the gilt time-piece, and the great red vases of silver pampas-grass, shivered into atoms!

CHAPTER VII.

WHAT THE WORST BROUGHT.

"WHERE is she!" was Aunt Carly's cry in terrible anger. "Where is she! where is she!" And as the sharp words rang from her, sharper at each repetition, she looked round the room, she stamped her foot, her hands were clenched.

"The wicked, wicked, wicked girl!" she cried again. "Where has she hidden! where has she gone!"

Poor Beatrice was standing crushed and appalled. She was clasping her little hands together, she was drawing her breath hard, she could do nothing but keep her eyes on the starred and shattered glass. Aunt Carly's glass! The Little *Dene glass*! For such a terrible thing to have been thought of, and to have been done, there!



"The immense chimney-glass, over the fire-place, behind the gilt time-piece and the red vases of silver pampas-grass, was shivered into atoms."—Page 90.

"I will have her!" Miss Brydie was still crying. "I will find her! She shall come!"

Beatrice changed then. A dreadful fear came on her as to what would happen to her sister. A fearful thing had been done by her, a fearful piece of revenge had been taken by her, and what would come of it?

"Aunt Carly!" she cried, holding her hands up in supplication, the tears streaming from her. "Don't thrash her! Don't kill her! Let her go!"

She scarcely knew what she said, poor little girl; she scarcely knew of what she was afraid; she only knew, right down in her heart, that to do such a thing as had been done was very wicked, and she thought her aunt was strong enough, and terrible enough, to give what punishment for it she pleased.

So, "Don't kill her!" was her cry, again and again. "Don't thrash her! Let her go!"

Aunt Carly looked down upon her as she held her hands up in her poor little appeal. "Find her," she said sternly. "You know where she is likely to go. Bring her."

Little Beatrice stood by, at that, and stood still. Her aunt had said, "Find her," her aunt had said, "Bring her;" but could she find her? and could she bring her? And even if Lee had gone where she suspected she had gone, should she tell? For her sister was just the same to her as herself; she did not know the difference; what made one happy, always made the other happy, and what seemed a grief to one, was a grief to the other the same. And now that Leonora had brought this overwhelming disgrace and overwhelming terror, Beatrice could not look upon it as only Leonora's disgrace and Leonora's terror, it was her own, just as much; through which, how could she feel less about keeping punishment away from Leonora than she would have felt about keeping punishment away from herself?

"I will be obeyed!" Aunt Carly cried, with all her severity. "What is wrong must be treated as wrong, and at once. Go for her."

Miss Brydie was ringing the bell, at the same moment, for *the maids*; they were running in, instantly; looking shocked and frightened at what had been done; each asking her

mistress in her own way, excitedly, when she had found it out, and how it possibly could have come.

"It has this minute been done," said Miss Brydie. "I have this minute heard it. It is some of Miss Leonora's wilful—wilful—wickedness! And see, here is the book she must have flung, and then she ran away!"

Yes, there was the book, fallen on its bent leaves, its cover scratched with the cut glass. Rebecca stooped for it, and picked it up; and it was all too clear. And there was poor young Bee, her head down, her chest heaving with sobs, feeling it precisely as if it were her hand that had flung the book, as if it were her violent little soul that had planned the mischief.

"I must have Miss Leonora brought to me," said Miss Brydie. "Here, in face of the wicked destruction she has caused. I must make her feel it. I must tell her what her punishment will have to be."

The servants looked at little Beatrice. They could tell now how there must have been some great disturbance; they could tell that she, poor child, was feeling it deeply; they knew, too well, that she would have to feel it still more.

"See if Miss Leonora has run to her bedroom, one of you," said Miss Brydie. "The other look in the garden. She ran through the conservatory. We heard the door. Get her at once."

"Aunt Carly!" cried Bee, as the servants ran. "Forgive her! Let her go!"

"What she has done, she must suffer for," answered Miss Brydie, sternly.

"Ah, but forgive her!" Bee still cried. "Aunt Carly! Aunt Carly! Let her go!"

"Do you know she has been wicked?" demanded Miss Brydie. "Do you know she has done a wicked thing?"

Beatrice did not like to answer. She thought that if she said yes, it would seem to be giving permission to her aunt to punish her sister; she knew that if she said no, it would be a lie. So she kept silent.

"I must teach you and her both, then, what wickedness is," declared Miss Brydie. "I must punish your sister for what she *has done*, and I must punish you, that you may know about it."

This gave no new trouble to little Bee. If Lee were punished, such punishment would, any way, at the same moment, be hers as well. Aunt Carly had said nothing that made things different to what they had been before. Only it brought Bee a new thought.

"Punish me instead!" she cried, holding up her hands again, in her appeal. "It is wicked, and I know it's wicked, and so does Leonora know it's wicked, and if you will punish me, Aunt Carly, I can bear it, and she will not be hurt!"

Aunt Carly looked at her. "Child," she said, "what do you mean?"

"Punish me!" Beatrice cried again. "Because I can bear it, and then Leonora will not be hurt!"

It seemed to touch Aunt Carly. "Would you have all I should have given Leonora, then?" she cried.

"Oh yes, Aunt Carly!" Beatrice hurried out. "I shouldn't mind it at all! Do punish me, and let her go!"

"Supposing," said Miss Brydie, slowly, "my punishment would be to keep your sister in her bedroom a week,—a whole week,—never letting her out once, only sending her up her meals, and then making her write to your brother to tell him of her wickedness, asking him to send me the money to pay for it?"

It sounded terrible indeed, brought out so sternly and so solemnly; but Bee did not flinch. How could it matter which was kept in the bedroom, and which never came out, and which wrote to Ernest? The one would not have the other; the other would not have any pleasure. It meant the same thing; and it was no effort to say that it should be done, and done willingly.

"Yes, Aunt Carly, I will do it!" was Bee's cry. "Yes, please Aunt Carly, let me do it, and let her go!"

Aunt Carly seemed touched a little more. "But supposing," she said, more slowly still, "I should think it right to send your sister away to a school,—to a boarding school,—to Plymouth or Exeter, a long way off,—letting her only come back here on the long holidays twice a year, would you do that instead of her, then?"

That was indeed a severe test. To be among strangers again! To be where everything was new, and everything

would have to be learnt afresh ! And to be there, too, for months and months !

Yet, in an instant, it flashed into Bee's mind that it did not matter which of the two had to be away ; it came to the same thing ; they would be apart ; all would be strange to both, the one here, the other there ; and, curiously, they would both be being punished, they would both be suffering ! She would not be saving her sister by doing this instead of her ! Let it come any way, both would have it. She could not manage it so that Leonora should escape !

But Beatrice was saved from going any deeper into this puzzle, just then. Back came Rebecca to say that Miss Leonora was not anywhere up-stairs, or in the house at all ; back came Rachel to say that she could not see her in the garden, let her look high or let her look low. It made Miss Brydie turn upon Beatrice as stern as she had been at the beginning.

"What do you think has become of her?" she asked. "Where do you think she has hidden herself?"

Bee hesitated. The old question was brought back of—If Lee were where she thought she would be, should she tell? Could she save her from punishment by not letting her be found?

"You know where she is, I can see," cried Miss Brydie, understanding why she did not answer at once. "Tell the maids where they are to go. Straight out. No hesitating."

Bee still hesitated, though. Should she tell wrong? Should she send the servants a long way out of Little Dene, so as to get time?

No, she said to herself at last, with her little heart wrung, to think she was compelled to say the no. What I say, must be the truth. I must not tell a lie.

"I think," she began through her tears—

"You must not think!" interrupted Aunt Carly. "You must speak straight out! Now!"

"Then—I think—she's with—she's with—Lady Con!" sobbed Beatrice ; bringing it out at last, in her grief and in her fright, so quickly, she forgot she was bringing it out in a way Aunt Carly would not understand, and that she might as well not have said anything at all.

"She's where?" exclaimed Miss Brydie, in amaze.

"With Lady Con," sobbed Beatrice again. And then, recollecting herself, she put it in another way. "She's in—she's in—that arbour in the upper garden, where all the shrubs are. The wooden house, with seats."

Miss Brydie raised her hand to strike her. "You are a wicked child!" she cried. "You are not telling me the truth!"

Little Bee looked up at that, with her young face so full of innocence and calm, it made Miss Brydie drop her hand ashamed. "No, Aunt Carly," said little Bee. "I wondered at first whether I should tell you a lie, but I felt it was wrong, and I wouldn't. I have told the truth."

Poor Beatrice! It was bad enough, surely, to have had the temptation to do wrong; but, after overcoming the temptation, to be told she was still doing the wrong, was too bad. Miss Brydie, though, did not draw her to her with any kiss, or comfort, or admiration; and the servants did not dare. In the face of the damage that had been done, and of their mistress's just anger at it (for they knew, as well as Beatrice knew, how bad the whole thing was), they had to check themselves, and keep where they were.

Aunt Carly broke the silence at last. "Take us to the place," she said. "We will go, all of us, together."

It had to be done. Little Bee led out of the house, and across the gravel, and up the stone stairs between the stone balustrades; and over some soft mossy grass, and through the flowering arbutuses and laurustinas, where syringas and laburnums, and escalonias, and a host besides, joined with these to make the head of the knoll into a thorough thicket; and then she led into the summer-house that stood in the midst of it, crying "Lee! Lee!" ready to take her sister in her arms.

But Lee was not there. The summer-house was empty.

"Oh! Aunt Carly!" Beatrice cried then. "What shall I do!"

Her aunt thought her fear was for herself; that she had never expected to find her sister here, that she had been *prevaricating all through*, and that, now this piece of wickedness *was discovered*, she was afraid of what it would bring.

"Let me hear the whole of this," she said, severely. "What does it all mean? Who is Lady Con? And why should you say your sister was with her, and bring us to this summer-house? What is it all about?"

Beatrice's answer came in a fresh burst of tears. "This *is* Lady Con!" she cried. "She is always here! We made it Lady Con directly we came! And we always come here when we want Lady Con to tell us what we ought to do!"

"Is the child mad!" exclaimed Miss Brydie. "Is the other child mad! Are they both mad, as well as rebels!"

Beatrice was not listening to her in the least, she was only full of her own distress. "Oh, Lee! Lee!" she was crying, "where have you gone? Where else can you be! Why didn't you come straight here to Lady Con!"

She was running then out of the summer-house to the back of it, where the shrubs were very thick; she was trampling them down, making her way through; and then she gave a short, glad cry. Crouching amidst them, hoping, with a poor weak hope, that she could remain there, and not be found, was Leonora; and Beatrice put her arms round her neck, and brought her through, and took her in, and there they stood, the pair; each knowing the wickedness of what had been done, each miserable because of it, each simply waiting to know what would come.

Aunt Carly seemed for a moment to be waiting too. She was not used to this unhappy work; she had never been through it; she did not know how it was to be met.

Then she suddenly recovered herself, and told the servants to go. "I can manage now," she said. "You can go back to the house. Now that I have Miss Leonora before me, I need not keep you from your work. You will go, one of you, into the room, and clear up what you can."

Beatrice shivered. It brought back all the picture of the ruined chimney-glass; all her first terrible feeling of dead awe. But it took her even nearer to her sister, and made her give her yet one more kiss.

"Now," said Miss Brydie, when they were alone, "What have you to say?"

Nothing. At least, neither Leonora nor Beatrice spoke. *They were simply there; clinging together, without a word.*

"Did you hear me?" Miss Brydie asked. "Speak, Leonora. What have you to say?"

Nothing, still. Leonora was showing a face that was fierce even yet; and her eyes were dry, without a tear, and she did not open her lips.

"If you are obstinate as well as malicious," cried Aunt Carly, "I shall have to punish you twice. It will be best for you to tell me at once that you are sorry. You must suffer for what you have done, that you know; but you need not make it any more."

That was true. Beatrice saw this, even if Leonora were still too much in the heat of her passion to be able to think as clearly as she had the power to think; and Beatrice urged her.

"We are to be kept apart," she cried, "not only at nights, as you heard Aunt Carly say, but all day long and for ever, and perhaps it will be for a week, and perhaps it will be for months and months; so, Lee dear, be sorry,—you are sorry, you know!—and then it will not be for so long!"

The frown was still with Leonora, but her eyes began to melt and glisten, and her chest began to heave.

"I—I—"

The tears were down in a burst, then. They were great big tears that were shaking her, and breaking her speech into little bits that made it difficult for it to be heard. But she struggled through.

"I—I—" she went, "I—did it—because—you said you would take Beatrice away. I did it—in a rage—and in a passion—to make you sorry—and to take something away from you. And it was very naughty. I know now it was very naughty—and I am very sorry, as sorry as I can be!"

Aunt Carly could not help believing it. It felt true. And into Aunt Carly's heart there went a little pity that had never been there before, and that kept her for a moment from knowing what to do.

Little Bee knew what to do, though. It was to be more loving still to Leonora; it was to give her any comfort she could.

"And you wouldn't do it now, would you?" she said tenderly. "And you knew it was wrong at once, didn't you? *And you came here directly*; and Lady Con told you?"

"Yes," Leonora was sobbing at every little coaxing ques-

tion. "Yes," and "Yes." And her hands were before her face, and her head was down.

Aunt Carly heard something in the speech, too, that told her what to say. And, for her, she said it almost kindly.

"Lady Con," she said, catching up the word. "You must tell me, Beatrice, what is this nonsense. What does it all mean?"

It made little Bee full of nervousness again—it was so different to speak to Aunt Carly to what it was to speak to Lee!—it made the answer she gave, a regular stumbling answer, not clear, or having any new explanation in it at all.

"It is only here, Aunt Carly," it was. "This *is* it. We called it Lady Con directly we came. And we always come here to know."

"That is not telling me," said Miss Brydie. "And I desire you to tell me. I want to hear."

She was growing impatient. All her sternness was coming back. Bee must try again.

"Mamma told us we always had Lady Con with us," she said. "She told us we were always to ask Lady Con whether we were doing right and wrong. And we always did and always do. And at Golden Edge we seemed to find Lady Con at once, and everywhere, wherever we were; but here, it seemed that we couldn't get at Lady Con at Little Dene, in the house; so we pretended—we just pretended, you know!—that Lady Con was here, and we always come here to find her, and we always do find her, when we are quiet, and not—and not—made angry, and when we can think of mamma! And that is how I knew that Lee had come here now, and that she would be sure, and quite sure, to be very sorry!"

Miss Brydie gave a great sigh. Half of what she heard seemed nonsense to her; in the other half, she could see some sense, and get some notion of what the child wanted to convey. "You mean," she began—

Leonora interrupted, though, through her sobs, to help little Bee out. "When mamma told us of Lady Con," she said, "it was only to make it pleasant. It was an easy word. And it sounded like a friend. We knew it meant the *conscience*. Only, that was hard—for little Beatrice; when *little Beatrice* had to begin. And so we've kept to it. And it

didn't matter. So that we came to it. And so that we found out."

"And so, also," said Miss Brydie, trying to keep hard and firm, "that you obeyed your conscience, when it had spoken; that you resolved never to do wrong any more; that you saw you had been wrong; that you confessed it; that——"

"Yes, yes, yes," Leonora was going at each stop; just as she had said "Yes, yes," to Beatrice's tenderness. Only, it was a pain to say it now! Whilst when Bee's arms had been round her, and Bee's voice had been so full of love it almost seemed to kiss as it came, penitence had seemed a comfort, taking nearly all the misery away!

"And so," Miss Brydie was continuing, "that you resolve to endure the punishment your wrong must bring you; and to go through it, as what must be; and as the price that you ought to pay."

It was a hard thrust; but there came Leonora's Yes to it at last, after a tight breath. "I would like to do what you say I am to do," she said. "I ought not to have broken your glass. I ought not to have hurled the book at it. I would like to do what I can."

Then came the first moment of the doing, and it was the first moment that was the trial.

"Come from your sister, then."

Unconsciously almost, it made the girls cling tighter together, and give a little cry. The next instant, however, Lee was giving Beatrice a kiss, Beatrice was gulping down her tears so as not to hold Leonora back, and Leonora was at Miss Brydie's side.

"Listen," said Miss Brydie. "You must be alone for a week. I cannot let you come down to my table; I cannot let you come down to your lessons. I shall send you your meals; I shall bring you your tasks, and you must do them. You will not go out of doors for that week, of course, not even into the garden. All that, you have brought upon yourself. As for the damage that you have done, you don't know, perhaps, that it will come to many, many pounds, and it will be weeks before I can have my room put right, for it will be *weeks after the glass has been taken away before it can be brought back again.* For that damage your brother must

pay. It is not right it should be my loss, and I am sure he would not wish it. And now, if, at the end of your week, I find you have conscientiously kept alone, have not tried to deceive me by getting to your sister or by getting your sister to get to you, you shall come out of your room, and shall write Ernest a letter, telling him what you have done and how you have made amends for it ; and all shall be just as it had been before, and I hope"—Aunt Carly had been solemn and formal up to then, but then she faltered, and her hand seemed to shake—" I hope we shall all be better friends."

There were two to hear this sentence ; there were two to feel it. To Bee, who stayed behind, it was perhaps even harder than to Leonora, who was solemnly led away ; but from that moment to the last, Bee did nothing, and she said nothing, that could make her sister's imprisonment longer, or any harder to bear. There were little ways in which she could try to take the hardness away ; and those she was always contriving. She could open the drawing-room door when she was playing her poor scales upon the piano, and her little bits of poor exercise-tunes ; for she knew the sound would be louder up stairs, and that Lee would like it. She could walk about in that part of the garden which Lee could see from her window ; for if Lee should chance to be looking, and could catch sight of her, she knew she would like that. She could say she would only have a little of this dish, and a little of that dish, if she knew it was a favourite of Lee's, so that when Lee's plate was brought in, Lee might have more. She could do her lessons extra well, to make Aunt Carly pleased, and therefore more likely to be lenient when she went up to Lee. She could sing, too, as she passed Lee's door. She could go to the summer-house, which seemed to be full of Lee somehow, and she could sweep it extra clean with the brooms they had themselves made (out of bunches of fern-fronds, with hedgerow sticks for handles) ; and she could put some extra decoration (made of choice round pebbles and some ruddy leaves) about the especial corner they had especially dedicated to Lady Con. She could water Lee's flowers, and weed her garden, and pick off the dead leaves and stones ; and she could be *very particular* to take extra care of Jet, Leonora's pet cat. *There was one very funny thing* came into her mind, too. It

was those words the American gentleman had taught them. "Look up, not down. Look out, not in. Look forward, not behind. And, Lend a hand." They seemed to have a meaning just now. Bee thought that she, herself, would look up, not down ; would look out, not in ; that if she could get Leonora to look forward, not behind, Leonora would be comforted. And so she told the words to Rachel ; and she told them to Rebecca ; she told them to them again and again, hoping they would learn them and recollect them, and telling them she was sure that Leonora would know all about them if she could only just hear them once more. She did not like to say, "Tell them to Leonora, please," for that would be sending her a message, and Aunt Carly did not mean them to send messages ; she only hoped the servants would just speak a little to Lee when they went in, and that, luckily, or fortunately, they might just happen to think of that. And long as the days were, and long as the nights were, and flat as everything seemed, and without any colour or relish, all these little efforts of Bee's took away some of the length, and some of the dulness, for the very reason, perhaps (at any rate, that funny Mr Hail Columbia would have said so), that she was keeping herself from looking down, and looking in, and looking behind, and was, although in such tiny ways, lending a hand.

And as for Leonora, she also, for her part, was shortening the time that had to pass before her release. She heard the piano, she caught the glimpses of her sister, she heard her go by. She applied herself till her head ached, and till her hand ached, over her lessons ; finding—yes, it was a fact—that they could be done, if she did apply ; finding it was possible to write words with the proper amount of letters in them, and those letters properly placed ; finding it was possible to see the difference between singular and plural, between comparative and superlative, between masculine and feminine, between a hundred thousand and a million, if only she used her faculties, and didn't let them lie there, all to waste. There was even some pleasure, she discovered, in remembering that it was Henry the Seventh who won the battle at Bosworth, as soon as she began to put it together that Henry the Seventh was *her little boy-king* Edward's grandfather. So it was interesting to read about the Phœnicians coming to Britain to buy tin and



“With a smiling face, she was seated in her old place, at her own desk, beginning her letter to Ernest.”—Page 94.

copper, when she allowed herself to think she could see the very sands on which they landed, and that she was near the very mines from which the metals they bartered for had been taken out.

But it is useless to say exactly where Leonora Casserly found things to interest her, if she would look for the interest; such things were in every subject that came under her hand, in reality,—and they always are. It is quite enough to say that her week's punishment came to an end at last; that Aunt Carly led her from her bedroom down into the schoolroom. (Beatrice was not there though; she was in the garden. Lee caught sight of her as she gave a sweeping look through the staircase window.) It is enough to say that Lee thought that everything looked very fresh and cosy; and that, very quickly, and with a smiling face, she was seated in her old place, at her own desk, beginning her letter to Ernest.

This little much of a particular must be put down extra, though. Aunt Carly had her hand upon Lee's shoulder, just at the first, to fix her, and put her right. And Aunt Carly's hand did not feel so much like a heavy hand, or an unkind hand, as it used to feel, nor nearly.

CHAPTER VIII.

WHAT WILL ERNEST THINK OF IT?

"PUT the date first," said Aunt Carly.

"Yes, Aunt Carly."

"The day and the month. Let me see, though;" and what might be called, perhaps, the shadow of a smile came on Aunt Carly's face, and there was about as much as the shadow of a shadow of a spice of fun sounding in her voice. "Are you quite certain you know what the day of the month is?"

She was meaning, Had Leonora been counting the days? Did she know how many had gone by since that other day that had been so terrible? Was she sure they had all gone, and that there were not one or two to be worked off painfully even yet?

Lee just moved about a little bit upon her seat, and just moved her shoulders about a little bit, and just gave a sort of

half a smile and half a sigh. "Yes, aunt," she said at last, like a gasp.

Oh dear! but there was very much more than this little reminder (which was meant as pleasantry, Lee knew) to be taken into the hands with a good firm grip. There was the whole—there was every little bit—to be told to Ernest, and to be told to him, so that he could understand it. And Lee was not used to writing letters,—big girl as she was growing, with regard to her flesh and her bones,—or to putting phrases and sentences together with any thought that other people were going to read the phrases and sentences, and therefore there must be something in them which the other people would be likely to want to know. When she had written letters, she had put in them such things as this: "I hav got a bad thumb; I pinched it in a draw;" and this: "Are you coming to us on your birthday? I pope it will be fine for you when you come;" and this (which she thought quite seriously long and womanly): "I have worked two little mats for you. I worked them in silk, becaus we thought it would be prettier than crewl." But now nothing of that sort would do at all. There would have to be sense in it; and what some dreadful lessons called "Account," or even "Narrative," or (ugh!) "Transaction;" for there was something to "narrate," something had been "transacted," and she—oh dear!—she had to give Ernest the "Account" of it! Leonora gave a woful look into the difficulties of spelling, too. She would have to recollect which side of the e the i came in "believe;" she would have to recollect the difference between a "dene" and a "dean"—which she and Bee used to laugh about, and say was of no consequence, because a Little Dean might as well walk about as a Big Dean, and they should like to see it. She would have to be very (she even, in this flash of her thoughts, thought "awfully," which was not the right word at all) particular as to whether she wrote "as" or "has;" as to whether she put "to," or "too," or "two;" as to whether she put "one" or "won;" as to whether—a whole spelling-bookful more. Then there was the writing. Aunt Carly had made her and Bee try to get out of their "round-hand," which was not round-hand, even at its best; but was an oblong-hand, or a *lop-sided hand*, or a *funny-as-bunny hand* all blind eyes (as

the pair called i's without any dots to them), and all curly wigs, instead of what they would have it were proper wise (y's) old gee-gees' nice long stroky, streaky tails. Aunt Carly was trying to teach them what Aunt Carly called an "Italian" hand. They were to begin their capital S's at the bottom, and go upwards, and give them a kind of twiddle-widdle at the top. Their capital P's were not to be in two Pee-ces (how Lee and Bee had looked across to one another, when they had first seen the joke of this !); they were to be down, and up, and then the top just thrown over and tucked in. Their capital B's were to have very small back heads, and be very bouncing in their bodies below. Their capital R's were to be very bouncing in their big back heads, and go into nothing beneath, which was exactly the reverse. Everything had been changed, indeed, since there had been that curious coming across from Jamaica to England in a ship. Yes, everything—upstrokes, downstrokes, crosses for t's, zeddery-zands (or whatever the right name was for those funny things you could put when you were in a hurry, instead of the word "and"), figures, the closeness of the lines, the way of folding the paper, the thickness of it, the shape of the envelopes,—the sort of postage-stamps at the end to finish with, of course.

O dear ! But though all this flashed into Leonora's mind, and made a sigh—or perhaps half-a-dozen sighs—come from her, she buckled to her task. She had been a heroine for seven days and seven nights ; and in this last hour that was to be passed before she and Beatrice were to be together in their old way again, she was not likely to refuse to use the application, to refuse to use the young strength and energy, that she knew she must use so that the hour might not be made into four or five. Besides, she really had a sense of honour. She had done a certain so much of mischief, she had been allotted a certain so much to do as the price of it ; and she would do it. Here was this, here was that ; and it wouldn't be right, having had the one, to hold back from giving up the other.

"There, Aunt Carly," she said, "there is the day, there is the month, there is the year. And now, here will be the address. L, i, double t, l, e ; D, e, n, e. I needn't put Hayle, Cornwall, need I ?"

"You must make your D so that it looks like a D, and not so that it looks like an O," said Aunt Carly; for of course Aunt Carly *was* Aunt Carly; she had not been changed altogether, any more than the children had been changed altogether, in one short (though long) week; and she was obliged to look very sharp and very scrutinizingly, and be exactly particular. "Yes," she went on, when Lee had altered it, "that is better, certainly. And now, would you like me to tell you what to say?"

Oh dear! Poor Lee almost dropped down her pen. She thought that if Aunt Carly would only go away, she might perhaps be able to make this unhappy "Narrative," this very lamentable "Account," into something of the same sort as would be found in a book; at the least, into something that should be so much like a book, that Ernest, knowing it came from her, his poor little sister Lee, would let it pass; especially if, when Aunt Carly looked over it, she put a big word in here and there to make it strong. But if Aunt Carly found all the words of it from beginning to end, it would be strong all the way through, and Ernest would indeed think she was dreadful!

Never mind. This was still part of the price. She must give it.

"If you please, Aunt Carly," she said, in the middle of another sigh.

"Very well," said Miss Brydie, looking on whilst Leonora was writing "*My very dear big brother Ernest*," as nicely and as carefully and as delicately as she could. "I shall not make it very long," Miss Brydie went on, "for you and Beatrice have both taken your punishment so extremely well that I am quite pleased you have that much of goodness in you, and I will not keep you here from her now any longer than I can help. We will begin this way:—*I am very glad to tell you—*"

Poor Leonora gave quite a painful little cry.

"But, please, Aunt Carly!" she dashed out, tears coming out with it. "I am not at all glad! I am very, and very, and very sorry! And I know that my dear, dear Ernest will be very sorry too!"

Miss Brydie had to pass her hand before her eyes. "Child," she said, putting her other hand on Lee's shoulder again, and

putting it quite gently, "child,"—and her hand nearly went up to Lee's hair,—“I have written all that other part myself, in my own way. That much I wrote some days ago, and the letter is already beginning its voyage there. I only want you to tell your brother of the good side, and how you have done all I wanted you to do to clear away the bad.”

Leonora's pen went down, and right down ; and Leonora's head went straight down to the page of which she had been so careful, and her great tears blotted it and blistered it, and her shoulders shook, and her chest heaved ; and there she stopped.

“Come,” Aunt Carly said, in a minute or two. “Come, we will try and get on. We will take a new sheet of paper, and begin again ; for you couldn't write nicely on this, you see, now ; your pen wouldn't run—and we will just go straight on, and not interrupt again till it is all done. Now, then.”

Leonora was obeying her, giving up the paper, and taking a new sheet, and then drying her eyes ; she was writing a word or two, and then giving another little cry ; she was writing a word or two further, and then being obliged to dry her eyes again ; but the date, the address, the substance, the signature (she put her own words to this ; she wrote, *Your very loving and very sorrowful sister, Leonora Casserly*), were all done at last, the letter was folded and put into an envelope, —it was time to be free.

“You may go,” Aunt Carly said. “Put on your hat. Your sister is in the garden. You will find her somewhere.”

Ah ! it seemed like a dream. Rather, it seemed like a great awakenment. The air was so lovely—it was a drink ! it was a nosegay !—the sun was so lovely—it lit into everywhere ! it made everywhere lively and warm !—the trees were so lovely, the flowers were so lovely ; ay, ay, and little Bee was so lovely, rushing to her from the upper garden, down the steps, and folding her arms round her, in such a great big joy !

“‘For we must share, if we would keep,
The blessings from above !’”

went Bee to her, in her delight ; repeating her mother's words. “*And oh, Lee,*” she went on, “I must say the other two lines, *though you know* them better than I do ! I must say—

‘Ceasing to give, we cease to have,
Such is God’s law of love!’

For, Lee dear,—dear Lee,—I haven’t seemed to have had any love, since I haven’t been able to give any! I haven’t seemed to have had any play, since I haven’t had you to have half of it for me! And now, from this minute, we shall be able to share everything like we did before, and then we shall keep it! We will give everything now. I give you mine, and you give yours to me, and then we shall still have it! For what mamma told us was right, although it seems at first that it couldn’t possibly be true! We do have, if we give! We do keep, if we share! All the more comes to us, for using the things! They only dry up, if they’re put by!”

Bee was in such a pretty flutter with her new learnt wisdom, brought out so simply. Bee was so bright and sparkling (and loving into the bargain), with all this pent-up philosophy, so mixed and tangled, and yet so innocent and child-like, which was now pouring out of her,—they knew, afterwards, both of them, where the beautiful spirit of what she said, had come from; they knew afterwards how many, many, many years ago that beautiful spirit had first shone, never yet, for a day, to lose its sweetness and savour—that Leonora could only think again how lovely everything was; the sun, the trees, the grass, the flowers, the beautifully-smelling air; and the two of them ran about, quite as happy as they had ever been in Jamaica, and thinking, at last, there was no difference between Cornish Carn Brea and the West Indian Cinchona Plantation, and that the low denes, or sandhills, at the bar, and at Godavery, and at St Gwythian, and Lelant, were quite as magnificent to look at, for a background, as the towering sides of their own semi-tropical and luxuriant Blue Mountain View.

Nothing remains all joy always, though. It is not possible. In front of the joy, and at the side of it, and a long way off from it, and quite near by, there are, and there must be, the great broad breadths of plain, and sober, and solid, and jog-trot work, that hem the joy in. And everybody must do this work; everybody must take it right up close into the hand. Treading off from the joy, there it is; springing up in the middle of it, *there is the joy*; and so little Lee and little Bee, who were *fast growing* into big Lee and big Bee, found. First,

there was the long waiting to be done before they could get Ernest's answer to Aunt Carly's and Leonora's letters. Running along all the time of this waiting, also, was their constant wonderment as to what Aunt Carly had said. Had she been very severe? Had she made things very bad? Would Ernest think they—(it was never "she," or "I;" they still thought of themselves, in all of that, as one)—would Ernest think they were so very wicked as to be incorrigible? And was it possible, also, that he would order one of them to be sent to one school, and the other to another, thinking they would "grow up" more quickly, and better, if they were separated? As a fact, they had not to wait more than two months to hear from their brother; but they went over and over the same wonders so many times in those two months, the months seemed to grow almost into years. They seemed interminable. They seemed most provoking.

"Does the postman ever forget to bring all the letters he has given to him?" Beatrice was urged by all this tedious delay to ask Miss Brydie, one day.

"No," said Miss Brydie; giving a smile that had grown to be almost a real smile now, and that no longer gave the girls astonishment. "He brought me a letter one day to say two great-nieces of mine were coming from Jamaica to stay with me; and it is quite possible he will bring me another letter some day to say the great nieces are to be sent away. I daresay, if he has such a letter, he won't want to keep it."

"There!"—Leonora and Beatrice looked this "There" to one another, when they were at the table; and they said this "There" to one another, when they were away from it, and could talk their wonders out. Hadn't they always said they might be sent away? Hadn't they always been sure it was quite likely? From being likely, it appeared to get actually decided, they talked about it so often; and they began wondering whether they should both be sent off the same day; and both have holidays the same times; and both still be dressed alike; which last wonder, as had often happened before, sent them so far off from the wonder with which they *had first started*, it seemed to be out of sight altogether. For *it made them look down at their frocks, and notice how*

short the frocks seemed to have shrunk up. And it made them run off to a door-post, where they had scratched up how tall they were, a few days after they had first landed. And it made them quite proud and happy, when they discovered that Bee was as tall now as Lee had been, and Lee so much taller than Bee could reach, on tiptoes, to scratch, that Bee had to stand upon a flower-pot to do the scratches, and then could scarcely be sure, conscientiously, that she hadn't tilted her pencil up a little too high, or let her pencil slant down a little too low, for thorough exactness and accuracy.

Let them keep their wonders to one point, though, or let them let their wonders wander, the letter was gradually coming, and at last the letter was delivered.

In it, Ernest was very grave. He was very distressed. He had been in hopes, he said, that his sisters would have taken all extra trouble off his hands by being as good as girls could be (which was very good indeed, he said, if girls would only be it). He had been in hopes, at least, that Lee would have set Bee a good example; for he had a host of things to worry him, and a host of things to give him pain, and he certainly did not want any addition to them. One of the things that gave him pain, he said (after saying a great deal more about his disappointment), was the finding quantities of their dear parents' letters and treasures and trinkets, when much of the wreckage and débris of Golden Edge had been cleared away, and such trunks and packages as had been discovered and rescued, had been looked into. They should see all these treasures, some day. They would do them good. He should just send them one now, though; or, rather, the copy of one; for he thought it would do them good now, and the good had better not be deferred. It was just some verses their mother had written upon himself, when he was quite a little boy. She had only had him, and their eldest little dead sister, then; and he was sure that would make it very interesting to Lee and Bee; and that if they thought about it all through, seriously, though they were children, they would see what their mother would like, and it would be precisely the same as if she were speaking to them.

"Now then," said Ernest in the letter, "here are the lines. Read them,"

Our Ernest lay down
 In his little night-gown,
 In lodgings close by the sea ;
 Our Ernest began—
 Such a dear little man !—
 To chatter to baby and me.

“ Oh, baby ! ” he said,
 “ You are nodding your head !
 Oh, baby dear, shut down your eyes !
 Be just like the sun,
 His shining all done,
 Asleep at the back of the skies.”

Then, “ Mammy,” he said,
 “ What a nice little bed !
 Soft pillow and blanket and sheet !
 Snug up to my chin,
 It can tuck me all in,
 It covers my dear little feet ! ”

Then Ernest declares
 He shall whisper his prayers ;
 And says, “ Oh, Great Father above,
 I thank Thee to-night,
 For the sun-shiny light,
 I thank Thee, I bless, and I love.

“ I thank Thee for this,
 And for mammy’s dear kiss,
 For baby, papa, and for me ;
 I mean to be good,
 Quite as good as I could ”—
 He stopped.—Fast asleep by the sea

“ Oh ! the dear little, darling little, fellow ! ” cried Lee.

“ Oh ! the sweet little pet ! ” cried Bee. Both of them thinking of a little flaxen-haired and sun-burnt-skinned Hayle toddlekins, just about as old as Ernest was represented to be, whom they had often seen playing outside one of the house-doors ; and neither of them being able to picture Ernest as having ever been a baby really at all.

“ *As good as I could !* ” said Lee, then.

“ Yes, *as good as I could !* ” echoed Bee. When, down in their hearts, they both of them meant to be as good as they could themselves, not only because they wanted to please *their brother*, but because they knew it was the only thing that *was right*.

And then they recollected, with a pang, that they had not yet heard whether they were to be sent to school and separated! Ernest had not said a syllable about it! Did that mean that they were to stay together still where they were, gloriously? Or did it mean that he had put down his wishes, in his big letter to Aunt Carly?

Aunt Carly put them out of suspense very quickly. "Children," she said, coming to them, "you will begin lessons next week under Miss Chester. She will be your daily-governess; and I trust—and I really believe—you will do the best you can to improve under her. We will try the plan, at any rate. Your brother approves of it, and we will see how it will do."

The children's faces seemed to grow into immense eyes. "And are we to be taught together, and stay at Little Dene?" cried Leonora.

"Yes, that is what your brother and I have arranged,—if it answers. As I hope it will."

"Oh!"

Miss Brydie bustled away. The girls were holding up their hands, their immense eyes seemed to be turning into immense smiles, and as Miss Brydie never felt easy with good and happy children (although she was very clever at knowing what to do when they were naughty!) she left them to themselves.

Then their "Oh!" came out again; and a regular chain of "Ohs!" and they rushed at each other, linking their hands together, and waltzing to a merry "Oh! oh! oh!" till they were obliged to leave off, because they were out of breath. Naturally, when they came to settle down, they began to wonder about Miss Chester;—who was she? where would she come from? was she old? was she lame, halt, blind, deaf, dumb, hump-backed? They knew she was not likely to be either of the last, of course; only, as usual, when they were full of fun, their fun flew over, in any fashion. One fashion was that they began to guess what was the lady's other name.

"Miss Chester," went Beatrice, saying the Chester as though she were tasting it. "Miss Chester. Um. Then, Lee, let us say her other name is Hester. Hester Chester, Hester Chester, pricked her thumb, and made it fester."

It was quite enough to set them rhyming everybody's name, whose name happened to come into their heads. They said

Miss Mace was sure to be Grace ; they said Miss Bethel was sure to be Ethel ; they said Miss Marriott was sure to be Harriet ; they said Miss Lawrence was sure to be Florence, and so on. They made many sly pieces of rhyme indeed, and had much amusement from them, during the week ; and then, when the new week came, and they were sent for to go into the schoolroom that Miss Chester might see them, they felt sorry instantly that they had ever rhymed her at all, she was so young and so charming, and it was so nice to find that she was certain which was which directly, as she gave each one a kiss.

"I never had any pupils from the West Indies before," she said. "You are quite interesting to me. For you have seen so many things I have never been so fortunate as to see, that, though I shall be giving you lessons, you will be giving me lessons as well, and we shall get on together, famously."

That was a different beginning to the beginning with Aunt Carly, certainly. The girls were made to know, at once, that what they knew was not rubbish, and childish, and insignificant, but had value. It belonged to books ; yes, just the same as what Miss Chester knew, belonged to books. Learning, it showed them, or knowledge (never mind the name), was made up out of what people saw and felt by just living in the world and looking at it ; and as they, Lee and Bee, had lived in the world, and had looked at it, and felt about it, so their little knowledge—as far as it went—might be told, even to a governess ! And after this nice beginning, there came a nice following. The Casserlys were able, in time, to talk to Miss Chester about what was in their hearts—which was better even than talking about what was in their heads. They spoke of their mother, and all she had taught them ; they spoke of their father, and all the life up at Golden Edge ; they spoke of their voyage, and what they learnt there ; and the whole story came out about the chimney-glass, and about Ernest being so sorry, and their wish to be quite good, to please him. "*As good as they could*," they said, even showing Miss Chester the verses from which they took the words.

In short, when a year had run out, and a second year was making itself into a year, month by month, and the girls were shooting up, tall and slim, almost "overgrown," they had



"Leonora . . . gave a great cry of delight. A gentleman was announced as 'Bringing a message from Jamaica,' . . . and she recognised him in an instant."—Page 106,

come to watch for Miss Chester's arrival of mornings, as something quite to their taste ; they had come to be waiting for her, to take her umbrella from her, or her cloak, or her satchel ; they had come to running down with her to the gate when she was going, so as to have her company as long as they could. At the mid-day dinner, they thought it delightful to listen to what she used to talk about to Aunt Carly ; in their strolls in the garden, in their picnics (for which she begged Miss Brydie, now and then), in their trips to Penzance shopping, or to Camborne (where she lived) to meet some of her old pupils, they thought it even more delightful to find that she could talk about everything, and could manage to make it so interesting, they were not "bored," but were impatient for more. Aunt Carly was quite pleased at the change, she told the girls, when Miss Chester was by, to hear. ("Aunt Carly, not so snarly," Leonora and Beatrice said to one another, in their old way, when nobody was by to hear, or to do anything else.) Indeed, the only thing wanted, at last, was to know what Ernest would think, and what Ernest would say.

"Our nice dear Miss Chester, perhaps now may rest her?" one said.

"Or he will request her, to tell him who dressed her?" went on the other, taking up the droll notion. "Or he will arrest her, and ask her to test her. If we always blest her, and always suppressed her, or sometimes depressed her? Only Miss Chester is too nice to jest her!"

Letters came from Ernest, of course ; a letter perhaps by every alternate mail. But Leonora and Beatrice wanted more than letters ; they wanted Ernest himself,—if they could have had him ; or, at any rate, something much nearer to having him than the mere taking hold of sheets of paper, although it was his hand which had written the lines upon them. And one day, when Leonora was in the drawing-room alone, practising those (shuddery) "scales" which Miss Chester always would have practised, she gave a great cry of delight. A gentleman was announced as "Bringing a message from Jamaica," and, looking in his face, Leonora took hold of his hand, feeling quite at home and friendly. He was the *good ship-friend*, Mr American Hail Columbia ; and Leonora recognised him in an instant.

CHAPTER IX.

ERNEST SENDS A MESSAGE.

"OH!" went Leonora. And then she gave a great joyful "Oh!" again.

Mr Hail Columbia was not so joyful nearly. He either was, or he pretended to be, quite perplexed.

"You!" he said, astonished. "You cannot be little Bee—I mean you cannot be the Beatrice Casserly who was on board ship coming from Jamaica!"

"Oh, no!" cried Leonora, laughing at his mistake (real or feigned, she had no time to think). "I am not."

"I thought not," said Mr Hail Columbia, seriously, as though that settled it. And then he said, "I beg your pardon," very gravely, and was going to take a seat.

"But," laughed Leonora, "I am little Lee, you know, which is just the same as being little Bee! It's only that I am Leonora, and not Beatrice!"

"Excuse me," said the American gentleman, still pretending to be serious, "but I came to see two little girls about that height,"—and he held his hand down so low, it was almost to his knees. "I have not the pleasure of being acquainted with a fine young lady whose head is up to my chin. May I ask you to be seated, madam?"

Leonora laughed, and was taking hold of his hand still, and shaking it. "How nice to think you have come!" she cried. "And to think you have come from Ernest!"

"Madam, dear madam," went Mr Hail Columbia, still as gravely as if he meant every word of it, "may I lead you back to the piano? You were playing some exquisite composition when I entered, will you favour me by continuing it?"

"Ha! ha! ha!" Leonora was going; and then Beatrice rushed in, her delight as great as Leonora's, and the two were going "Ha! ha! ha!" together.

"I am amazed!" said Mr Hail Columbia. "Little pippity-poppettys!" he went, pretending to be playing with two little pretended children ever so far low down. "Little kiggamajigs, they mustn't run all over the deck, they mustn't;

and they mustn't swarm into the gig or dingey, and climb up and down the fok'sle ladder ! I—I beg your pardon, ladies !” he cried then, drawing himself up, as if suddenly remembering. “ This lady was at the piano, when I interrupted her studies. Permit me !”

He was offering his arm, to take Leonora back to the music-stool ; and the girls were in an ecstasy.

“ Yes,” cried Leonora, “ and he says I was playing an ‘ exquisite composition,’ and it was only those rum-tum-tum scales !”

“ Rum-tum-tum, was it ?” cried Mr Hail Columbia, catching her words up. “ Thanks. I wanted to know the composer’s name. It might have been Herr Umscarum, or Signor Fal La, or that great French maestro, from the Conservatoi-oi-oi-oire, M. De Idditie ! Will you favour me by playing me that movement of Rum-tum-tum’s again ?”

“ What was it like, then ?” cried Beatrice, delightedly. “ Leonora ! let us make him tell us what it was like !”

“ Pardon, ladies,” said Mr Hail Columbia. “ My musical education was neglected in my youth, or perhaps my youth neglected my musical education ; it is, alas ! much the same thing. But still, I think I can hum, that Rum-tum-tum. It was like this a little, if not much. La,”—and he took his voice down as low as his voice would go,—“ La, la,”—when he put his thumb under his second finger, as if it were very difficult to do it,—“ La, la, la, la,”—thumb under again,—“ La, la, la, la, la, la, la, la !” till he had pretended to go from the very bottom of a piano to the very top, and his voice was so high, it was only a thin squeak.

“ I think I can hum, that Rum-tum-tum !” the girls were both going, echoing him, and being amused to the utmost.

“ Please to hum, more Rum-tum-tum !” Bee went, when he had finished.

“ Pardon, ladies,” he said, exactly as if he meant it. “ But when I have sung, I feel unstrung. It fatigues me.”

“ Ha ! ha ! ha ! How nice you are !” the girls laughed.

“ And so you really are Lee, and you really are Bee ?” said Mr Hail Columbia ; dropping his pretences, though every *now and then* he went back to them again for the fun of it, *and to see the girls’ enjoyment.* “ This one is Lee, and that

one is Bee, and you are both Casser-lees, and you really are located in Hayle, Cornwall?"

"Yes, yes," went Lee and Bee. "And you really are our good, kind, funny Mr Hail Columbia, and we are *so* glad to see you!"

"But how came you to know me?" the gentleman asked. "What made you recollect?"

"Why, I knew you," cried Leonora, "because here you are! I was obliged to know you! You are you!"

"Not changed then?" asked Mr Hail Columbia. "Not altered. My hair—pardon, ladies—but I have been staying in Paris; and the coiffeur there,—you would know all the coiffeurs in that celebrated Rue—Rue—Rue Quelquechose? took especial pains with my hair, my beard, my moustache; and I thought he must have done so much that no one would have known me."

"But the coiffeur didn't cut your nose, or cut your eyes, or cut your voice, or your hands, or you, or anything!" cried Beatrice. "And if Lee hadn't known you, I should; and we are, oh! we are, *so* glad to see you!"

"Then about somebody in Jamaica," said Mr Hail Columbia. "I guess you'd like to know something about him?"

Of course! The girls had a score of questions in a moment. When was Ernest seen? How long ago was it? Where was he when he was seen? How was he? How did he look? Was he tall? Was he a real man? What did he say? What did he ask? What did he want to know? What messages did he send? When was he coming? How long would it be?—which perhaps, counted up, do not make quite a score after all; only that the girls asked some of the questions twice over, and some of them they asked both together, making duets of them (*à deux langues*, as might be said, instead of *à quatre mains*); considering which, and beginning from the first, and running along the whole string to the last, possibly the number may be made out,—at any rate, as near as need be.

Well, Ernest was in Jamaica when he was seen, Mr Hail Columbia began to tell Lee and Bee, giving out his answers *very comically*, so as to tease the girls as much as he could.

And it was in this century, the nineteenth, not the last ; and he looked—out of his eyes ; and he said—words ; and he asked—questions ; and he wanted to know—answers. And as for when he was coming, he never was Cumming, he was Mr Ernest Casserly. And as for whether he was a real man, it was a great pity to have to say it, or even to whisper it, but there was a strong suspicion that he was not real at all, but stuffed ! Then, as for how long he would be, he would be 5 feet 11 inches perhaps, if a tailor were going to measure him, and that would be ever so uncomfortable if he found a berth assigned to him that only measured 5 feet 4.

“And did he want to know anything about us ?” asked Leonora, all on the laugh.

“I think he knew all about *us*,” answered Mr Hail Columbia. “I think he knew it was a personal pronoun, plural number, first person, objective case, as I used to say in my raising time, at any rate. There is nothing more to know about it, is there ?”

“Shall you tell him anything more ?” asked Leonora, letting him joke just as he liked, and enjoying every word of it. “When you get back, and he asks you how we were, and where we were, and what we were, and all, what shall you tell him ?”

“Let me see,” said the American. “I must consider. When he asks me how you *were*, I shall have to say you don’t wear at all ; when he asks where you *were*, the same answer will do, for you haven’t worn out anywhere, you are bigger, and broader, and fatter, and taller, everywhere ; and when he asks what you wear, I shall have to look at you a little longer, to get it all into my memory, and be sure I know my lesson. For instance, what sort of a fixing do you call this ? You are wearing it, you know, and I must tell of it.”

It was Leonora’s hair-net, which Mr Hail Columbia just tipped up a bit with his little finger, and just let fall again, comically.

“Go on !” cried Bee. “It is so nice ! Do let us have some more !”

“Then what is this you wear ?” It was Leonora’s earring. “And what is this ?” It was her apron. “And this ?” her sash. “And these Ojibbeway mocassins, or *bottes de Paris*,

with such high heels and gay cockades, that look so spruce and bonny?"

"It is the dearest fun!" cried Bee. "It is delightful!"

"But tell us," cried Leonora, "how you came to be so very, very kind as to come and see us? I can scarcely believe now, that you are really here, it seems too nice, a great deal."

"Well," said Mr Hail Columbia, speaking just as he used to speak when he and the girls had been fellow-passengers, "I came to 'Lend a hand.' Can you understand that?"

"I think I can," said Leonora. "But I would rather you explained it. You make it as nice again, when you put it in your own words."

"Besides," said Beatrice, "it's so nice to hear you. Go on."

"I thought often of the two little girls I sailed with, then," said the American gentleman, humouring them. "Although it is now nearly three years ago, the remembrance of those two little girls going to England after a sad calamity which they were too young to understand, never quite went away from me; and as business took me to Jamaica for a few days before coming here, I thought I would ask at Myrtle Bank, the boarding-house, about them. I thought, if they had not come home, that it would 'Lend a hand' to that brother of theirs they were so fond of, if I offered to come and see them."

"And was Ernest there?"

"And did he ask you?"

"Yes, Ernest was there; and Ernest did ask me," said Mr Hail Columbia, answering both their questions, and smiling at their happy impatience. "He happened to be at Kingston, and staying at the very boarding-house, and sitting just opposite to me. What do you say to that?"

"It is like seeing him himself!" cried Leonora.

"It is too nice!" cried Beatrice. And if the girls had not been quite so near to "grown up," they would have put their arms round their good visitor's neck, and have given him a hug.

"Well," he continued, "your brother and I had a long talk. We had several long talks. Indeed, I went with him to Golden Edge—"

"Oh, Lee!"

"Oh, Bee!"

"And I stayed at Golden Edge—"

"Oh, Lee!"

"Oh, Bee!" And the girls clasped their hands at each ejaculation, and looked at Mr Hail Columbia as if he were a welcome sun, and they were basking in him.

"And they are getting Golden Edge finished now nicely. It will be a beautiful place when it is done; as beautiful as any in America, in my own State—which is the best praise I can give it. And Casserly—your brother, I should say—told me all his wishes for you, before we had done. You are to come home to him, not only the good girls he knows you will be, but elegant, accomplished, splendid, the leaders of Jamaica fashions, and the envied of all the Kingston and Port Royal belles!"

Mr Hail Columbia had been warming up into his fun again, over this; and it made the girls laugh. Still, they knew he was only putting sportively, or comically, what had real truth for the foundation of it; and they besieged him with another series of questions.

"Put them alphabetically," he said, for more fun, when they stopped at last, for a moment out of breath. "Let me have them methodically arranged, like an index, so that we may lay our hands on each directly it's wanted."

"But we want them all!" laughed Bee.

"Precisely. I know it. Therefore we must catalogue them all. Now, begin again."

"Well," said Bee, "what more are we to know before we go back?"

"Well," said the American gentleman, mocking her manner, "how much do you know now, before you are to think of going back?"

"We know all Rum-tum-tum's music!" cried Leonora, saucily.

"Pardon," cried the American, pretending to be very polite.

"You only know some, of Rum-tum-tum."

"Oh, what makes you so nice?" cried Beatrice, in admiration.

"Is that question No. 2 in the list?" asked Mr Hail Columbia. "Or is it only put in, like an *appoggiatura*?"

"You have not answered question No. 1 yet," cried Beatrice, waving all others away. "What are we to learn, I asked you?"

"You must learn not to laugh, when a Yankee comes to see you. You must learn to take all he says, with becoming gravity. You must learn to look very prim, and precise, and sedate, and demure."

"And what else?" asked the girls, laughing more than before.

"You must learn to wear the most odious goods, if only they are the fashion; you must learn to cut your gowns off here,"—Mr Hail Columbia drew his hand from his shoulder to shoulder,—"*to cut them off here*,"—he drew his hand across his arm,—"*and to let them be ever so awkwardly long behind, and yet to step out upon them, without tripping.*"

"Oh, Lee!" cried Beatrice. "Shall we ever be able?"

"Of course" cried Leonora, with a toss of her head. She was thirteen months, and over, nearer to being grown up than Bee was, so all these things seemed to her all that much more easy.

The American gentleman gave a little laugh. "Come," he said, noticing it all, "you must be quick, and ask all else you want to ask, for I have not much longer to stay and chat with you. I had only two hours, to begin with, on my way on to Land's End, to see it and the Logan Rock, and the rest; and I must just see your great-aunt, Miss Brydie, a minute, you know, to pay her my respects. Will you ask whilst she is here, or will you ask before she comes?"

There was a twinkle in Mr Hail Columbia's eye as he spoke. He was clearly wishing to take all news of everything back to Ernest, having heard all news of everything from Ernest before starting, and having fully comprehended it. "Come," he said again, "perhaps on the whole you had better ask me, now we are alone. Begin."

"Are we to stay here all the while, or are we to go to boarding-school?"

That was the great and the important thing which the girls wanted settled; and as Leonora brought it out all in one full pour, as it were, a flush came on her cheek, and her eyes were *really anxious*.

"Which would you like?" asked the American gentleman, noting everything.

Leonora took a moment to consider. "Tell Ernest," she said at last, beginning slowly but becoming assured as she went on, "that we are quite happy now ; that we are getting used to it ; that—that—I am very sorry for all that has gone by, and that we are much better now, for Aunt Carly says so. Tell him, please, that ever since Miss Chester came, everything has been all right. She is nice all through, and we love her."

"Can Miss Chester stay ? Is she going to leave you ?"

"Oh, I hope she can stay," cried Leonora, alarmed at the thought. "I have not heard she is going. If she goes, perhaps it may be horrible again. Oh, dear !"

Mr Hail Columbia was watchful of all. He was trying to "lend a hand," the girls were sure ; and he was trying to lend a hand with good effect they found, now Miss Brydie had entered the room, holding his card (for his name was not Hail Columbia, of course ; that had been only one of his jokes), and when, after some politenesses and civilities, they began to talk.

"I am glad to be able to lay a little difficulty before you," was what Miss Brydie said. "You will see my nephew again so soon, and can explain better to him than I can by letter, if you will be so kind, although I shall write as well, of course, to burden you as little as possible. It is about Miss Chester, the girls' governess."

How the girls' hearts sank. How their eyes flashed to each other, and then to their visitor, full of meaning.

"She is an inestimable lady," said Aunt Carly, with all her ceremony and form. "She has given me entire satisfaction. But, only yesterday she was telling me her plans, and they are that she is thinking of giving up out-door engagements altogether."

To see the girls' eyes again, and to see their visitor watch them.

"And if this should be so," he said to Miss Brydie, "what follows ?"

"She is in treaty for a house at Penzance," answered Aunt Carly, "*a large commodious house, quite suitable ; and she proposes to open it for a school.*"

"A boarding-school?"

"Yes. And she has two or three pupils promised to her already, with the parents of other children she has taught, taking a warm interest in her future. Now, I do not like weighing my plans before these young fellow-passengers of yours, on whom you have been so polite as to call; but some allusion to Miss Chester's prospects is sure to come out in talk with her,—she will make no change for two or three months; and thinking I may trust them with so much of my confidence at their age now, I ask you, although they are here, to tell their brother I am at some loss what to do, and would very much like to have his suggestions."

"Might I, although a stranger, venture to make a suggestion?"

"By all means," answered Aunt Carly, "and it will put me under an obligation to you."

"Then," said Mr Hail Columbia, with a happy look at the girls, "I would advise that these two young friends of mine remain pupils of Miss Chester, and go to reside with her at Penzance, as soon as she is ready to receive them."

The darling! The good kind friend! The delight of him!

"Become boarders with her?" went Miss Brydie, ruminatingly. "Leave Little Dene and go to Penzance? Coming back to me only for holidays? It will do excellently. For I do not know where I could get another lady in the neighbourhood, advanced enough to take Leonora and Beatrice now, and carry them on; and I was thinking I must have a resident-governess from London, which was precisely my difficulty. I am obliged, indeed, and I think you may almost tell my nephew it is settled."

"Well, is it what you like?" the American gentleman asked Lee and Bee, as they ran down with him to the gate after he took leave of Aunt Carly, one on each side of him. "Shall I tell your brother you are pleased?"

"Tell him you are the nicest Mr Hail Columbia in the world!" rattled out Beatrice.

"And tell him," cried Leonora, "we will do everything to be what you said we were to be, and that we want to be back to him with all our hearts."

"And stay!" cried Bee, for the gate was reached, and their

friend was holding out his hand, prepared to go. "How long do you think it will be before we shall have learnt enough to be back to him? Remember we want it to be as short as it can, although it will be so nice to be with Miss Chester."

"How short and how long?" echoed Mr Hail Columbia. "I wish I could stay and have some more fun with you, without risking the loss of my train, you ask such comic questions. But I will tell you and be gone. I am afraid you must be as much as three years."

"Three years!"

"Yes," he said; "you are mere children yet, you know; liking cakes and candies and all sorts of goodies, just as you did on board. You do like those, don't you?"

"Yes, indeed," cried Bee, with all sorts of glorified recollections of his confectionary treasures coming to her with a rush.

"So I thought," he answered. "And the hotel-man will be here directly with a package I have brought for you. I didn't forget little Lee and little Bee, you know; and now you are big Lee and big Bee you will learn to forget time, and you will find the three years gone directly."

Undoubtedly, one way to make time go at a pretty sharp pace was to spend some of it in unpacking the parcel which arrived almost as soon as Mr Hail Columbia had disappeared round the pond by the corner. Undoubtedly, also, another way to make time trot, or canter, or even gallop, was to have Yankee feasts, as the girls called them, as long as the delightful parcel lasted. Yet three years looked to be a tedious period, when Lee and Bee calculated that it would contain over a thousand days, and over one hundred and fifty Sundays; and that their frocks did not reach down to the ground yet, and would have to do that much, and to stop there, doing it months before they could be turned into dresses proper, and could be allowed to trail.

"There is one thing," said Leonora, to try and get some comfort out of this, "we are sure to be very, very grand when we do go back. And I wonder what sort of dresses our first long ones will be. I think, yes, I think I should like blue. *Blue is true*, and blue will do."

"Why don't you say," cried Bee, "I should like white, for

white is bright, and white is light? Or, I should like black, for black won't crack, and black will pack? Or"—for Bee did not care so much for dresses as she cared for Yankee cookies, which she was eating then enjoyingly, and she couldn't help treating Lee's millinery speculations with some little scorn—"why don't you say I should like brown, to go to town, and I should like gray, to wear to-day, and I should like puce, for school-room use, and I should like green, fine as a queen?"

"Because," began Leonora, firing up a little—

"Wait! wait! wait!" cried Bee, having a brilliant idea come into her, and longing to bring it out, "why don't you say I will have striped, that my pen may be wiped? I will have plaid, to drive me quite mad? I will have spots, and tie it in knots? I will have check, quite up to my neck? Why don't you—"

"Because I don't!" thrust in Leonora; determined to cut Bee short, and giving such a strong nod to her head as she did it, that she and Bee both burst out laughing, and found other things connected with the three years' waiting to talk about, which could be talked about with thorough good humour.

Yet three years were three years, after all! A thousand nights to go to bed, and a thousand mornings to wake up again!

"Were the nights but Arabian nights," sighed Leonora, "each with a tale to make it go quickly, we might get over it!"

"Were the nights but King Arthur's knights," sighed Beatrice, mimicking her, "each on a horse with a tail to make it go quickly, we might get over it!"

"Goose!" went Leonora.

"Cackle!" went Beatrice.

"You can't make nonsense out of the mornings, anyhow!" triumphed Leonora. "There they are, serious enough, a thousand all of a string, and we shall have to bear them!"

"Yes, mourning always was a serious thing," went Bee, mischievously. "You are right."

"But still, you know," said Leonora, laughing her nonsense away, "we can't go to sleep for three years, and then wake up again, so what are we to do?"

For one thing, luckily, they were all right with regard to Miss Chester. Ernest, of course, had not a word to say against them going with her. When his letter came, he said it was exactly his desire that his sisters should leave Little Dene for a while, and go to boarding-school ; for he began to think they would be benefited by living with other girls their own age, or older ; and he was wanting them to come back to him, not children, but really women, able to manage for themselves, and for him, and for the house, and the estate, amongst all the people, usefully. Therefore, when Miss Chester's school was ready, the girls had a happy move to it. Knowing her, and being so much attached to her, to go to her house did not seem like going to school, but like going into sea-side lodgings ; and the other girls at once took to Lee and Bee, and became their pleasant friends. There were plenty of studies to be done ; for Miss Chester was a hard worker, and always made her girls work hardly with her ; but then there were plenty of walks to be taken, sometimes into the town, amongst the shops and the shipping, sometimes along the beautiful roads towards the Lizard, lined with ferns ; and there were excursions to St Michael's Mount, and Marazion, and over the soft, warm, mossy moors to Towednack and St Ives. There were other schools in Penzance, too ; there were masters who taught at all these others as well as at Miss Chester's ; these masters gave parties sometimes, bringing all their pupils together ; and so, with the thousand days slipping away in this way pleasantly, when the Casserlys went home to Little Dene for their first long holidays, and for their second long holidays, and for their third long holidays still more, they found themselves able to reach up to shelves and cupboards, which had been totally beyond their reach at first ; they found the upper garden almost on a level with the lower garden, with no need, really, to go through the ceremony of using the stone steps at all ; they found the servants stealing into the hall to listen to their " pieces," they had become able to " execute " brilliant " passages " so different to the old " Rum-tum-tum ; " and they were conscious, by whatever manner and method it had been done, that two years out of the three they were to wait were absolutely gone, and that the mystery of " growing up " was gradually being solved.



"As Leonora shook out a flowered and founced ball-dress, spread partly on a chair, Beatrice clasped her hands joyfully."—Page 120.

"I thought we should have known more about it, you know," said Beatrice. "I thought we should have felt it. But we don't."

No. Growth is not felt. It is only now and then that something arrests the attention, showing people that growth has come; and one day something occurred to Leonora and Beatrice which arrested their attention, and made them feel quite sure.

"A message from Ernest! A message from Ernest!" Lee cried to Bee, calling her into Miss Chester's sitting-room, as she came out of the drawing-room from her music-lesson with the master. "I didn't dare to call you before, of course, although my tongue was burning. But Ernest has sent us what he calls a message, and see, Bee, dear! Look here!"

The room was full of bonnets and dresses, and "tulle," and "tucks," and all sorts of feminine treasures, the contents of a great packing-case; and as Leonora shook out a flowered and flounced ball-dress spread partly on a chair, Beatrice clasped her hands joyfully, and could scarcely believe what she saw.

CHAPTER X.

ERNEST COMES.

It will be necessary to go back a little, to explain what all this importation of modish millinery meant.

A sentence will do it. The grandest invitation concert that had ever been given at the Penzance Town Hall was about to be given there by the music-master, Mr Sebastian Barker, R.A.M., to exhibit his pupils, and Leonora and Beatrice Casserly were to play and sing at it. They were only to be amongst the rest, naturally; but does not that mean to them dress and fuss, and delight and exultation, and every form and shape of excitement of which excitement is capable?

"Miss Chester," Mr Barker had said, more than half-a-year *in advance* of the arrival of the flowers and flounces, "this

will be an important occasion, and I want us both to take full advantage of it."

"A morning-concert, Mr Barker?"

"Certainly. Or I could not hope to have the help of many of my pupils from a few miles out, and to have the attendance of many of their friends from a distance. The trains would not suit at night, and people do not care to drive much in the dark."

"It is true. And I prefer daylight for my girls, decidedly."

"I am very proud to have your approbation, Miss Chester. But may I hope, that as you live so near the town, you will not object to your young friends having a little recreation after the concert is over? For I am commissioned by Mr Stanworth, some of whose boys, my pupils, will help at my concert, to say that he intends having his annual breaking-up theatrical performance and dance on the same evening, and he much hopes that you and your party will favour him with your company. Proper invitations will reach you in due time, of course; and if all can be carried out as we intend, am I not right in saying the occasion is very important?"

Important? Truly. And the girls could do nothing but talk of it, and think of it, and dream of it, and plan for it, from that moment. Were they to sing? Were they to play? Were they to do both? And what were they to sing? And what were they to play? And what were all the other girls in their own school to sing and play, and all the other girls and boys elsewhere?

It seemed useless to ask Mr Barker any of these questions, for Mr Barker did not seem to know himself.

"Come, girls," he would say, one day, to all Miss Chester's pupils, dealing them out copies of a new glee. "Take the soprano and contralto of this, and let me hear what you make of it. Four beats to a bar. And this is the time of it. One, two, three, four. Now then. Begin."

But after he had accompanied them for a few lines, he would jump up in a pet, and take the copies away.

"Have you not learnt what a quaver rest is yet?" would be his cry. "And can't you sing *piano* when it is marked *piano*, and *staccato* when it is marked *staccato*, and can't you count

bar, and see that you are coming in after six bars, some of you, when you oughtn't to come in till after seven?"

Tut! The girls' mouths would go down, and the girls' shoulders would go up, and they would make "faces" behind Mr Barker's back which were not exactly the faces they showed when Mr Barker turned round. But they admired their master all the more for his tiffiness; and the oftener he bounced up from his seat, disconcerting them, the surer they were that he was very skilful and knew all about it.

"May we not try that again?" Beatrice ventured to ask about one of the glees, one day. "That *la-la-la* was so exceedingly pretty!"

For an instant Mr Barker stared. "No; you may not try that again," he cried, with a frown, when the instant was over. "And if you did think that *la-la-la* was so exceedingly pretty, you should have sung it so!"

Clearly, it was a very difficult and a very irritable thing to arrange a concert (Beatrice being more deeply convinced of it than anybody), and Mr Barker's anxieties and desire to do his best were received with the deepest impressiveness.

"Perhaps you and I will have to play our duet," said Lee to Bee. "And perhaps, as well as singing in the choruses, I shall have to sing my last new song, and you will have to sing yours."

There was a girl, also, who could play the violin, and one who could play the guitar (and sing a Spanish song to it, which all the others thought unapproachable; and these, as well as the rest, were wondering what would be expected of them, and when they should be told. There was no use at all. Mr Barker, divining their wonderment, came out very sharply.

"Whether you are to play *Casserry*," he cried, "or the 'Athalie' or whether you are to sing this number or that, whether you are to give us your *Scotch* or your *Irish*, behind me here, are to favour me with, and tell you. You will, all of you, be singing it thoroughly; and you will be called upon for—"

ERNEST COMES.

That was final,—at that stage of the proceedings at my rate. And all three of Miss Chester's pianos were occupied for every minute in the day; and the violin had its turn, and the guitar had its turn; all of it being done enthusiastically and diligently, since the girls were resolved to do the best that was possible, for their own sakes, as well as to make the concert a success.

Well, and Mr Stanworth and his scholars' theatrical performance, what about that? It was going to be "Julius Cæsar," the girls heard, one week. All the better parts were to be cut out, as not of much consequence; and the boys were not to attempt Roman costume, because it would be awkward and expensive, but were to do the best they could in general, with their soft "Jim Crow" hats turned up at the sides.

"Then if it is to be Julius Cæsar," cried Beatrice, "let us hope Mark Antony will leave out 'Beware the Ides of March'—I am sure I shall be obliged to laugh, in spite of me."

"Yes," said Leonora, "and I am certain what Cassius says—

'He had a fever when he was in Spain,
And, when the fit was on him, I did mark
How he did shake!—

that if he shakes too much, to show it, I shall shake too, for I shall shake with a titter, and I shall be very sorry."

"And Lee," said Bee, "is it in Julius Cæsar where they say—

'Let every feeble rumour shake your hearts,
Your enemies, with nodding of their plumes,
Shall bow you into despair?'

I hope you don't you see, plumes and fans were very consistent with such a beautiful idea of a party?"

"The idea," said the girls, "is very superior grown-up manner dear," said Miss Beatrice Cawverly, my cousin; Miss Chester was reading Cæsar; and I don't wonder you can forget,—and I don't wonder the chits of boys are going,

order "Julius Cæsar," was current. They were going to see it.

bars, and see that you are coming in after six bars, some of you, when you oughtn't to come in till after seven?"

Tut! The girls' mouths would go down, and the girls' shoulders would go up, and they would make "faces" behind Mr Barker's back which were not exactly the faces they showed when Mr Barker turned round. But they admired their master all the more for his tiffiness; and the oftener he bounced up from his seat, disconcerting them, the surer they were that he was very skilful and knew all about it.

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"Whether you are to play Haydn's sonata, Miss Casserly," he cried, "or the 'Athalie' with your sister, or whether you are to sing this number or the other number, or whether you, there, are to give us your Scarlatti or your Corelli, or you, behind me here, are to favour us with your guitar,—I shall not tell you. You will, all of you, practise everything you have; practising it thoroughly; and you will consider yourselves *liable to be called upon for whichever I choose.*"

That was final,—at that stage of the proceedings, at any rate. And all three of Miss Chester's pianos were occupied for every minute in the day; and the violin had its turn, and the guitar had its turn; all of it being done enthusiastically and diligently, since the girls were resolved to do the best that was possible, for their own sakes, as well as to make the concert a success.

Well, and Mr Stanworth and his scholars' theatrical performance, what about that? It was going to be "Julius Cæsar," the girls heard, one week. All the ladies' parts were to be cut out, as not of much consequence; and the boys were not to attempt Roman costume, because it would be awkward and expensive, but were to do the best they could in jackets, with their soft "Jim Crow" hats turned up at the sides.

"Then if it is to be Julius Cæsar," cried Beatrice, "let us hope Mark Antony will leave out 'lend me your ears,' or I am sure I shall be obliged to laugh, in spite of me."

"Yes," said Leonora, "and I am certain when Cassius says—

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And, when the fit was on him, I did mark
How he did shake'—

that if he shakes too much, to show it, I shall shake too, only I shall shake with a titter, and I shall be very sorry."

"And Lee," said Bee, "is it in Julius Cæsar where they say—

'Let every feeble rumour shake your hearts,
Your enemies, with nodding of their plumes,
Fan you into despair'?

I hope it is; for, don't you see, plumes and fans seem so consistent, and give one such a beautiful idea of a party!"

"Then you'll not get the idea, Miss Beatrice Casserly, my dear," said Leonora, in a very superior grown-up manner, "for those lines are in Coriolanus; Miss Chester was reading them to us yesterday,—I wonder you can forget,—and I don't suppose Mr Stanworth's little chits of boys are going to murder *that*."

Neither were they going to murder "Julius Cæsar," according to the next rumour that was current. They were going to be *nautical*, and try "Black-Eyed Susan,"

"In that, I suppose," said Bee, who would have her joke, "they will fight a great deal to get the black eyes; though, indeed, and before a mixed company too, I don't think they need give one to poor Susan!"

"Now, isn't she absurd?" cried Leonora, appealing to the other scholars. "She knows as well as we do that there's no fighting of the sort she means in the play at all; but that it's all about—about—By the way, does anybody know what it is about?"

No, nobody did. But that proved to be of no consequence; for word came that Mr Stanworth's "chits" were not going to play "Black-Eyed Susan" either; they were going to "do" Blue Beard in tableaux without any speaking; and the young ladies settled down to the contemplation of such a performance quite comfortably. It would be superb fun to see the boys dressed up as the wife and Sister Ann; it would be superb fun to see the boys dressed up as the row of dead wives, the opened closet "discovering" them there, all of them shown as if hanging, with their heads all on one side. It would be capital fun, though not quite so superb, to see the brothers rush in at last to save the wife and sister; and if Blue Beard's blue beard should really be blue, and as long as the young ladies' longest "back-hair," just twisted round and hung down in front, perfect contentment would be given, and nothing further would be required.

"Will it be this way?" cried Beatrice, unpinning all her wavy dark hair in a trice, twisting her white combing-gown round her head for a turban, and then holding her long locks under her chin, whilst she went "Wag-wag-wag," to make them go up and down, beard-wise.

"The very thing!" cried Leonora, catching the inspiration.

And Leonora fell on her knees, as the wife, with her hands up, supplicatingly. Another girl jumped on a box, waving a towel (into a cupboard, but that is a detail), as Sister Ann; and the rest posed themselves against the wall for wives, in more or less crushed attitudes, each showing there had been murder, with no possibility of getting over it.

Then "Ha! ha! ha!" the performers all went, at the end of *their* improvised little entertainment, there being nobody

there to find fault, and their own pleasure being ample. Indeed, the method hit upon in this hilarious way seemed so commendable a method, that from that moment, on those evenings when Miss Chester and her assistants were otherwise engaged, it was resorted to frequently. Starting up from the preparation of German exercises, or the composition of French essays, the young ladies would drop into momentary tableaux, perhaps illustrative of something they had been reading, perhaps illustrative only of the fact that they were young and easily pleased and happy; and though the schoolroom would resound for the time with laughter, it all brought about good, for there would be a return to studies afterwards, all the more painstakingly for the merry interruption.

And now for the millinery. It was to be for this wonderful concert, and for this wonderful theatrical performance afterwards, of course.

"*We should like to be dressed very nicely,*" Leonora had written in her letter to Ernest; whereupon Beatrice, who was looking over her sister's shoulder, had scratched out "very nicely," and substituted "beautifully."

"*You need not mind what Beatrice puts in,*" Leonora had gone on. "*In some things she is clever enough; Miss Chester says that in her English essays she shows a vivacity of comprehension which is quite remarkable.*" "Thank you," Beatrice had dashed in, over the line. "*In matters of dress, however, I regret to inform you that Miss Casserly says—*" "Miss Casserly is only Lee, trying to give herself airs," had been Bee's quick interpolation. "Pay no attention to her." "*—she has no taste or no discrimination whatever. She has even been known to trim a hat with buttercups in November, and to decide that holly with scarlet berries—think of it!—would do for her church bonnet in July. So, Ernest dear, if you will take what I say about the dress question, I think we ought to have everything quite new and quite nice, like the Corsellises, and the Pascos, and the Vyvyans, and the Carlyons, and all the others; and provided we can get permission soon enough from you to give the order, this Penzance dressmaker will be able to suit us nicely. She is a clever woman.*"

"Yes," Beatrice had scribbled in, "so clever, she makes

her bills out *making* for *making*, *lineing* for *lining*, she drops her g's and h's when she speaks, and when she wanted to recommend a girl, the other day, to have her skirt *bouffée*, she called it buffered, and we have never got over it !”

“*She is a clever woman at her business,*” Leonora had gone sedately on—just silyly drawing the flat of her pen across Beatrice’s hand so as to smear it—“*and as she is making for all the other girls, I should like her to make for us, much better than that—*”

“Silly old,” Beatrice wrote above, with a carat under, to show the place.

—“*Miss Tregenna whom Aunt Carly always has, by the day, to work at Little Dene. We shall have more style; we shall be more like the others; more what you once wrote to us that you would like us to be—comme il faut.*”

“And dear Ernest,” Beatrice had added to all this, as a coaxing postscript, “if you could let us have a little more pocket-money, it would be more *comme il faut* still ! I find the *comme il faut* is a foe who will not be vanquished till my purse is empty, and when my purse is empty, I neither feel industrious nor amiable. Jamaica postage-stamps are sixpence, instead of a penny ; foreign post paper is absurdly dear, compared with the other ; they always bring the collection-bag round at church, at every service ; Aunt Carly expects us to provide our own tulle, for ruching round our necks ; my new spotted fall blew away the other day when we were driving to the Logan ; and I do hope you will take all this into consideration. There is such a delicious confectioner’s shop, too, close to the Town Hall (where the concert is to be), selling such delicious jumbles, Bath buns, and raspberry sandwiches, that it is a hard matter to go by it without buying something ; and I beg respectfully, my dear sir, to call your attention to this subject likewise. A pressing necessity having come upon me yesterday, also, to give a ragged little bare-footed beggar-boy twopence, because he begged so prettily, I desire that this item of charity will weigh with you, and that you will send a special fund to meet it.”

“There !” Leonora had cried, when all this much had been *presented*, either in neat or very slovenly fashion, and either

as seriousness or burlesque; "we will neither of us put another word! Ernest will let us have as much as he can let us have; for, in one sense, you know, some of it is ours, as much as it is his. In seven or eight weeks the return mail will have brought back his answer; and till those seven or eight weeks are over, we will let—pouf! yes, just like that!—we will let the subject go."

It was an excellent intention, could there have been adherence to it. But was it likely? On the very way home from the procession-walk, during which letter-posting was allowed, and during which this very letter was posted, Beatrice pointed to some "*recherché*" something or another hanging up in a draper's window (particularly enjoying the *recherché*), and said she should like that tint, or that texture, or that treatment (she really did not care a jot what, and only did it for perversity), when the time came to order the dress for the party, and when she should be especially sure to recollect it. Continuously, too, she was alluding to the dress by going "Pouf!" in imitation of Leonora's airy dismissal of it; and she would pretend to catch something floating by, to have it escape her, to repeat this, and finally, when she had pretended she had secured it, to look at what she had captured, rapturously, calling it "a sweet thing," and tossing herself as though she were wearing it, and knew it was very becoming.

There was no banishment of the matter from Leonora's mind, either,—even had she not been stimulated by Bee's comic reminders. The other girls were writing to their homes, and receiving letters from their homes, in reference to the notable affair; they were balancing the advantages of mauve, or *écru*, or cardinal, or *bleu chinois*; they were wondering whether they should be treated with kid gloves with innumerable buttons, or whether they should have to fall back upon their black silk mits; they were weighing the different effects of camellias in the hair, of *gloire-de-Dijon* roses, of simple forget-me-nots, of *marguerite* daisies; and so Lee was very quickly in the stream of it, with all the rest, nothing hindering her.

"That's the postman's ring!" Bee had cried at last, when she and Lee were in their room dressing one morning. "I

am sure of it. Yes," for their room looked into the road, and by rushing to the window she could see who was going away. "It is he! And this is the right morning, you know, for the West India mails!"

"Are you sure?" said Lee. "I thought it was not till to-morrow, usually?"

"No; to-day," answered Bee, quite positively. "I have noticed how exact they are, often. Oh, Lee, isn't it a pity we mayn't open the letter-box for ourselves, but are obliged to wait for Miss Chester!"

It might be a pity; but it had to be done, by stringent rule. Prayers had to come also, and breakfast; and then, and not till then, was it Miss Chester's habit to possess herself of the morning's letters, and deal them out to her pupils.

"News from the Colonies!" she had cried, on this particular morning, picking the colonial letter out. "Leonora and Beatrice, here is a letter from your brother." And as she had handed it over, Lee had taken it, and she and Bee, without waiting to hear the luck of the other girls, had scuttled away into the garden, that in the short interval before lessons they might make themselves mistresses of the letter's contents.

It was glorious. Ernest was absolutely coming himself! And coming to take them back with him to Jamaica!

Could it be true?

"Lee!"

"Bee!"

Yes. They turned to that glorious first page again, and there it was, in all the full delight of it. Moreover, as Ernest meant to arrive in England by a certain mail, which would give him time to reach Penzance for the concert, his sisters were to have whatever Miss Chester thought suitable, and they were to have it good and abundant, because he should like to see them at their best. He wanted to be proud of them; and to find that their English residence (their English captivity, as they had once thought it) had metamorphosed them from baby-romps into charming women, who could go back to Golden Edge to take their mother's place, and fill it as charmingly as she had done.

"*But here is an idea,*" Ernest had said, at the end of his

letter. "*I am coming by the French line of steamers, landing me at Bordeaux, and giving me the opportunity to see Paris; after which I shall cross from the Channel Islands to Southampton. What does Miss Chester think of me ordering all your togrog-ery in Paris (I believe that is the proper word), and bringing it over with me? Over here, we think a great deal of the Paris fashions,—I mean, of course, the ladies do; and though it may seem peculiar for me to burden myself with millinery hunting, if the matter of measurements can be got over, I believe I shall find it more interesting than troublesome, and to please my little sisters I will willingly undertake it.*"

So that was how it had been. Inch-measures had been obtained—

("Let it trail very long," had been Lee's directions to the dressmaker, who had hung the inch-measure from her waist, and looked up to her for orders.

"Oh, yes!" Bee had cried, capping her. "Let mine be so magnificently long that when I stand at the window it trails right out at the door!")

—important figures had been written down on sheets of paper—"If you please," Beatrice had stuck in, "Leonora is a brunette, and I am a brunetter!"—all had been carefully posted to await Ernest's arrival in Paris; and the only thing that had differed from the original intention was that here was the packing-case delivered, and Ernest had not brought it.

"And why should he call it a message?" cried Leonora, continuing to shake out the tulle, or toile, the crimping, or gimping (whatever it was), whilst Beatrice remained clasping her hands in her first ecstasy. "There, see, on the table is a paper in his own writing, the first thing I saw when Hannah helped me to force off the lid; and it just says 'a message;' and I wonder why?"

Bee put her wonderments aside for the moment, and so did Lee; it was so enchanting to go on emptying that packing-case, and to find it such a store-house of treasures.

"Gloves!" cried Bee. "Oh! lovely!"

"Fichus!" cried Lee. "More lovely still!"

"Flowers for our hair!" "Coral brooches!" "Kid boots!"

"*Des bas !*—I won't say that in English !" said Beatrice, whose exclamation that happened to be. "*Jupes de mousseline !*—French again !" "*A sortir du bal !*—called so on the label, or I should have called it an opera-cloak ; and see ! here is a paper on it to say it is a present for Miss Chester ! I am so glad !" "Some boxes of French plums, all the way down here at the bottom !" "Some chocolates !" "A parcel carefully tied up,—let's snip the string with the scissors ! That's right ! let's snatch off the paper, and — and — it's Ernest's portrait !"

It wanted Miss Chester to see this portrait, it wanted the governesses to see this portrait, it wanted the girls, and even the servants, to see it, before Lee and Bee could settle down, and feel anything like calmness. Why, he was as distinguished looking as the county member, and ever so much handsomer than the young earl's tutor ! His hair was in a beautiful mass ; his beard—neither too long nor too short, just a proper medium—was in a beautiful mass ; his moustache had exactly that air to which it was impossible to give a name, but which was exactly the air that it ought to have ! There were the dear old features, too, instantly bringing back what Lee and Bee remembered of them ! There was their own dear brother, only that he seemed a completed man now, instead of a just-begun one, and completed to perfection !

All true ; every word. But why had Ernest sent these things, making them a message, instead of bringing them ?

The next morning's post, when the next morning's post was sorted out, brought an answer. Ernest was ill. He was obliged to stay in Paris, not kept to his bed, but kept to his room ; and as there was a chance that he could not get to Penzance by the day he desired to get there, he had sent his purchases on. But the girls were not to be upset, he said. They were to enjoy their *troggery*, and enjoy their concert, and he would get himself into travelling condition, and come to them, as soon as he could.

Lee and Bee, though, could not be otherwise than very seriously upset. What was the concert to them ? What was the boys' play ? What were even the Parisian dresses ? They hoped, as Miss Chester bid them hope, that Ernest would yet



"She flew down, and flew in, and she had her arms up at Ernest's neck and Ernest had his arm round her waist."—Page 132.

arrive; that, as there were yet seven days before the appointed day, he might come on the sixth, or the fifth, or the fourth; that, as he had not come, up to that fourth, he was all the more likely to come on the third, or the second; but as the second had come, which was the last but one, and the first had come, which was the last of all, and Ernest was not there, and had not written to say he would be there, Lee and Bee were quite distressed, and implored Miss Chester to let them stay behind, giving up concert and entertainment entirely.

"Nay, dears," Miss Chester replied, "that would not be right. Mr Barker has assigned you your parts, and your places in the programme, and it would never do to drop out now. Up to your room, come, like sensible girls. Put on your finery, the same as your schoolmates are putting on their finery; and be sure you are ready, and do not keep our party waiting."

To hear was to obey, in old Oriental fashion. And to be sure, when the dresses were laid out upon the bed, and the boots, and the "bas," and the flowers, and all the etceteras, were nicely arranged to be handy, and, to be sure, again, when Leonora, going straighter to her work than the volatile Bee, had succeeded in getting her dress on, with the boots, and the "bas," and all the etceteras, she could not deny that the effect produced gave very substantial consolation, and that it would have been a pity, certainly, at that last moment, not to have let the effect be there. Judge, however, of her overbrimming joy, when, being summoned by a servant to go down to the drawing-room directly she was ready, she flew down, and flew in, and she had her arms up at Ernest's neck, and Ernest had his arm round her waist, and they were looking at one another, after all those years of absence, lovingly.

CHAPTER XI.

EVERYONE IS HAPPY.

"CAN it really, really, be true !"

"Yes, Lee, my love, yes !"

"But—"

"But what ?"

"Why," said Leonora, and she was putting her hands from Ernest's neck on to his hair, and his beard, and just stroking his cheek with her fingers, and finishing off by giving him another delighted kiss, "you don't seem like an old, old, elder brother, who might be—oh, ever so old !—you don't seem like the old, old Ernest, but you seem exactly like—a gentleman !"

Ernest laughed, and gently put his sister away from him, and began turning her round. "And you," he said ; "what am I to say to the little romping Jamaica child, who in a few years has changed into this ?"

"Is it nice ?" Leonora cried, dropping down so that her dress might spread more elegantly. "And am I nice ? But Bee !" she started up with. "I must run for Bee ! One moment, that's all !"

And in one moment (or as near as need be) she was back with Beatrice, who had her new dress on, certainly ; but who had no flowers yet in her hair, and no flower at her neck, and who had her new satin boots in her hand, just about to think of putting them on ; and who flung these away, and flung out her arms, and was caught by Ernest in a great shower of petting and kisses.

"Upon my word," went Ernest after a while, when he put her away, in turn, and began spinning her round in the manner he had spun Leonora.

"And upon my word !" went Bee, extricating herself, and imitating his admiring manner, whilst she walked round him inspectingly, being unable, since he was a man, to set about spinning him.

"But you look," she cried, when she had finished her

survey, and when her eyes were up at his hair, and her eyes were down at his boots, "you look, not like Ernest, but like a gentleman!"

"Isn't that just what I said!" cried Leonora.

"And isn't that just what I laughed at?" cried Ernest. "For, tell me, what is the reason you should be surprised I should look to be a gentleman?"

"Because you are our brother!"

"Because you are Ernest!"

"Because, in fact," went on Leonora, taking up Beatrice's exclamation and her own, and weaving them together, "we had thought about you as a bit of a tease, and yet as of somebody to be afraid of; and as a boy, and yet as an old man; and as one of ourselves, and yet as, somehow, our father; and so, altogether, now we find you are—"

"Far better than the music-master," put in Beatrice, finishing the sentence for her sister, "and far better than the riding-master, and far better than the silly old vicar, and quite as good as the three curates and the member all rolled into one,—why, it is a splendid surprise for us, and we can't help telling you so!"

"Then arithmetic has not helped you?" laughed Ernest.

"Arithmetic!" cried Beatrice. "Whatever has arithmetic to do with it!"

"To make you think of numbers," said Ernest. "If, when you were nine and ten, I was twenty, now you are sixteen and seventeen, I am still only twenty-seven. Isn't that an easy sum for you?"

"Yes, but we don't think of such things as that," said Beatrice, firmly. "A brother's a brother, and a father's a father, and a gentleman's a gentleman, and we never mix them up."

"And it's only because we see you all at once," said Leonora, in further wise elucidation, "that we cannot, at first, quite make it out. But, Ernest! What are we to do? Miss Chester and the girls will all be ready directly, and the concert will be ready, and we shall all have to go!"

"Then we all will go, that's all."

"But you, too?"

"Certainly. I have ordered a closed conveyance,—a fly, or whatever you call it here,—to follow me up from the hotel, it may be at the door now—"

"Yes, it is!" cried Bee, after one of her quick rushes to the window. "That is, there are three there, and I know Miss Chester only ordered two."

"All right. Go on!"

—"and I thought I would tell Miss Chester that I would take my little sisters to the concert myself."

"Splendid!"

"Delicious! Because, don't you see," came Bee's enjoyed addition, "the girls will be so savage!"

"Not really savage, you know," explained Leonora, "only we shall be able to tell, by just some little something, that they are feeling it; and that they are wondering whether we are going to snub them, and whether, therefore, they hadn't better begin the little performance by snubbing us!"

"And they'll go, *so*," said Bee, drawing herself up in her new finery. "And they'll go, *so*"—and she turned her head. "And *so*"—casting down her eyes. "And *so*"—pursing up her mouth. "And let them go *so, so, so*, as long as they like, I shouldn't feel in the least offended; for I should go *so, so, so*, myself, if it could possibly happen that they were taken off grandly by a great grand brother; and it's only a school-girl's way, and nothing's meant by it, and I shan't mind it at all!"

"And might not some of the *so, so, so*," laughed Ernest, "come because they thought you were a little bit grand yourself?"

"Oh dear no!" declared Beatrice. "They would know, quite well, inside of them, that I was only a girl dressed up!"

"Are you a girl who has finished her dressing up?" asked Ernest, after his amusement at this. "I see a Paris boot out there, and I see another under the table; and I see a something wanting about you that does not appear to be wanting in Lee,—though I can't tell you what it is; so what would it be if you were to run away sharply, and were to run back again as sharply as you can, nicely completed, and ready for starting?"

"Lee must go with me," cried Bee, scrambling over the

room to pick up her boots. "I can't possibly pin the flowers into my hair, unless she is there to help me. And I believe—I really do believe—that I shall split my boots!"

"Besides, I must go; I must get my gloves and my cloak," said Leonora. And so the two ran off, meeting Miss Chester coming in to greet their brother; and the two ran back, to find Miss Chester and all the others already started, and to find themselves, in another minute, driving along in the carriage with their brother, just as he had said.

"There's our music," cried Bee, putting a large roll of it on to Ernest's knee. "We were each to take our own, for fear it should get lost at the hall in the general scramble. Will you take charge of it?"

"It seems that I must," said Ernest, giving an expressive look at all the finery in front of him.

For furbelows were half-covering the right hand window, and furbelows were half-covering the left hand window; and furbelows seemed as if they wanted all of the seat on which Ernest sat, and as if, even then, they would like to have something to do with the coachman, and to hang as a decoration to the horse's tail. Surprisingly, too (or was it, not surprisingly?), the higher the furbelows rose, the higher rose Lee's and Bee's gratification. They looked at it in all its invasion and fuss, and airy kind of invincible conquest, as if they would not have had it a "pucker" or a "ruck" short, for any money. And what with this, and what with the relief it was to have their apprehensions for Ernest dissipated, and to have him sitting before them glad and well, their eyes sparkled, their cheeks burned, and (going back two or three years in their growing-up) their tongues overran with vivacity. Darting from some remark about their songs, to some remark about their glees, darting from some admiration for the "set" of their dresses, to some explosive gratitude to Ernest for sending them, they pointed out every object of interest they passed as they drove along, be it person, be it place, and kept their brother's attention going from one side of the carriage to the other, distractingly.

"That's the way we go to church!" it was. "There! Quick! See!" "That's the road to the moors!" "There's

the best view of St Michael's Mount !” “That leads down to the railway station !” “See that shop ? That's where we go for macramé twine, and rainbow beads !” “See that old sailor ? He's the Duke of Worthing, they say, really ; only somebody's keeping him out of his property. And it's a great shame !” “See that little old fellow ? He's a great curiosity-collector ; and they say he has a Titian, or a Tietjens, or something, I don't know, which is worth thousands ; and that he has the snuff of the identical candles Sir Humphrey Davy experimented with, and something remarkable on paper written by Miss Biffin with her toes !” “And see ! Yes, that's the vicar, that one ! And he's going to the concert !” “And these are the De Ballas, and those are the Pratts ; and here come the Trevanions driving ; and here are the curates, all of a row ; and here are the Stanworth boys walking in procession ; and those are the Rays, and those the Busbys ; and there are the placards, look ! saying it's Mr Barker's concert, see ! ‘Pupils of Mr Sebastian Barker, R.A.M. ’ ; and, oh dear me ! what a thick block there is of carriages at the Town Hall steps ! and there go our girls and Miss Chester just through the door ! and I daresay we shall have to wait ever so long, —but no, we shan't, for it is our turn, now, and here we are !”

There was no diminution of this delicious excitement, either, when it came to entering the hall with Ernest, as part of the audience. For Leonora and Beatrice were not to remain part of the audience. They were to be beckoned away quietly into what it was rapture to find called “the green-room ;” they were to be allowed to return from there to “the front,” with strict injunctions to present themselves again during the performance of the number in the programme immediately preceding their own ; they were to repeat this, sometimes being *at* the concert, sometimes being *of* the concert ; and they could not fail to think attention was being directed to this duplex position, and to feel all things a glorified flutter.

“Did you notice that girl in white, looking over my copy ?” Leonora asked Ernest, on returning to him after taking part in a glee. “She's one of ours, and she can embroider so

beautifully. She can take any flower or leaf you like, say a beautiful little bronzed ivy, and she can copy it exactly."

"See that girl in blue, going to play the bass there?" whispered Beatrice, "She always carries a little spinning-top about with her, one of those tiny toy ones as big as your nail, and she makes it spin almost for ever!"

"There!" cried Leonora, re-seating herself, when she and Beatrice had sung a duet. "Those three little things who are going to play this trio are Mr Barker's own children. That big boy, with his violoncello, is only twelve; and the two girls, with the violin, are only nine and eleven.

"And they have been saying such funny things in the green-room!" added Bee. "The boy calls his violoncello his great-godmother, and says she is to bring him some silver spoons; and the little girls say that half-biscuits are only semi-quavers, and half of half biscuits only demi-semi-quavers, and that they must eat whole biscuits, which they call crotchets and minims, or else they couldn't play in time!"

"Those people up there," whispered Leonora, indicating some with a movement of her eyes, "are from The Mount. Mr Barker was very anxious they should come, because they are to stay in Cornwall some time now, and he is to teach the eldest girls. Those people across there are only visitors, and nobody knows them. That is the vicarage party. These just behind are from Hayle, at that house you can see right up above Little Dene."

In short, in their provincial simplicity, and their elation, Lee and Bee thought Ernest must be as much interested in the small news of the neighbourhood as they were; and they poured it out to him from the dashing overture which began the concert, and all along it, and all through the interval between the two parts, and down to the moment they left him to help in Pinsuti's glee, "Spring Song," which brought the concert to an end. For example, there was their fellow-pupil, in the course of the programme, with her song to the accompaniment of her guitar. Could Ernest have recollected what his sisters told him, they furnished him with as many *facts* concerning this young lady as would have enabled *him* to have written her memoir. There was the girl from

another school going to sing that old insipid Scotch song, and who had plaid trimmings to her dress to be appropriate. Ernest was not to run away with the idea that she was Scotch at all, or had ever seen the other side of the Tweed; she only came from Devonshire, just down by Torquay. There were those droll little trio children again. They had just finished the last "minims" and "crotchets" on the plates; and had said that as they were Barkers, they were the same as dogs, and ought to learn to bark out "Bow wow." (And one, the big one, Beatrice said further, had said he could bow, although he couldn't wow, and he had bowed to everybody in the green-room, declaring he knew half his lesson.) There were the Stanworth boys, in a part song, unaccompanied by any of the girls. In the silence before this began, and in the silence after this finished, Ernest was made acquainted with all the expectations of the ensuing Blue Beard performance; how this boy, it was thought, would be such, how that boy would be such another, how, at last, if it should differ any way from these surmises, it would not really be of the slightest consequence, since the having him, Ernest, was everything all in itself, and those particular boys were nothing more than "chits."

By the by, was it necessary for Leonora and Beatrice to go and see these "chits"? If Ernest were to speak to Miss Chester about it, and were to say that, now he had come, his sisters would rather spend the evening in his company, did not Ernest think that Miss Chester would say he should do as he liked?

"But what I would like is that you should go," said Ernest. "I shall drive back with you to school, and leave you there, for Miss Chester to undertake you for the evening, according to her previous plans. Then I shall return to the hotel to dine,—you are forgetting, you see, that I am not a school-girl, but, as you say, a gentleman; and I will be with you again some time in the morning early."

Well, perhaps after all, that was best. Lee and Bee had time by it to go amongst their schoolfellows, carrying to them their whole budget of delight; and Lee and Bee opened the *said* budget, taking advantage of the time to the fullest.

Oh, yes, that was their brother, of course. And of course he was handsome ; he always had been. Only they hadn't said anything about it, because what was the use ? And he had come from Paris, and London, and the Rhine, and Madrid, and Rome, and the Riviera, and the Tyrol, and St Petersburg, and Mount Blanc, and Algiers, and the Opera Comique, and the La Scala, and Ben Nevis, and the Tropics or the Trossachs, or something, and everywhere.

"At least," said Beatrice, in answer to a question from the guitar-girl, which brought her to see that inflation was carrying her to a geographical fib of gigantic proportions, "I don't really think we asked him *exactly* about any of his travels ; for the concert was going on all the while, you see ; and the concert brought a great deal to say that was only about the concert, and we shall hear more of the real thing to-morrow. Only he looked as if he had been everywhere, didn't he ?"

That was undoubted. Leonora, with a spice of sarcasm, which was coming back to her, now she was sobering again somewhat into being "grown up," had many proofs of Ernest's decided appearance of having been in all places where it was possible that he could have been.

"He had the Alps on his forehead," she cried. "Couldn't you see them ? His bunch of keys came from St Peter's ; and when everybody clapped their hands to *encore* us, he said it reminded him of *Patti* !"

There was enjoyable distinction, moreover, at the tea-table, when Miss Chester congratulated Lee and Bee on Ernest's arrival. The meal was hurried, for there was to be a quick set-off after it to Mr Stanworth's party ; but it was not too hurried for Miss Chester to say she was much interested in Mr Casserly ; that, in their few minutes' talk, he had shown himself to possess an abundance of information ; that a colonial life appeared to be very captivating ; and that she quite envied Leonora and Beatrice who would so soon be entering upon it. She tacked a little moral lesson on to her monition, of course. ("Moral lesson" was what the girls had come to call her exercises in this department of her duty, and they said it was "Vol. 1, Col. 1, Chap. 1, Rap 1, pp. ever so many" ; only they said *it all good-humouredly*, having an admiration for what they

heard, really.) She said that her pupils were to take the good of England back with them to Jamaica, and not the bad,—if they had ever found any. She said they were to seize on the good of Jamaica when they reached there, and not the bad,—if they should chance to find any; she said it was in everybody's power to take the right road, if they chose to take it, and to keep away from the wrong road, if they chose to keep away from it. She said so much, in fact, as the piles of bread and butter sank lower and lower, that by the time the piles had disappeared and the plates were empty, the girls had come to think (precisely as she intended) that growing up had its serious side, and that they must look at this, like looking at a cloud as well as at its silver lining, and not be too sedulously occupied by that charming side of growing up that was all flutter. However, the flutter was there again in a moment (just as it should be), driving everything else that was not flutter entirely away;—since play is always good, if it be innocent play, and all the heart should be put into it, whilst it lasts, the same as all the heart should be put into the realities. There was the rush up into the bedrooms, for wraps, and the last smoothing of the hair; there was the little crushing commotion in the hall; there was the sorting of the girls into the first fly, and the decision as to who were to wait for its second journey, when it came back; there was the clatter on to the town stones; there was the passing of Ernest's hotel, and the great happy wonder as to which was his room, and whether by any chance he should be looking into the street; there was the pull-up at Mr Stanworth's house, with the careful gathering of skirts, on stooping through the fly door; there was the fussy entrance into Mr Stanworth's hall, and the serried ranks (the girls were certain they were "serried ranks") of black-coated and white-collared "chits," drawn up against the walls to be of service, and to give a welcome to the fast arriving guests. And this was enough, surely, and to spare, for girls who were at last (and yet at first!) in real grown-up dresses, and whose "education" was at the very turn of being "finished," and who only wanted some pronounced formality to look upon themselves as absolutely free?

But how should all the fun (putting aside the flutter) of that evening be told to Ernest on the morrow, as it must be told? There was he in that stupid hotel, perhaps dawdling over Potage à la Reine, and Salmi de faisan, and Boulettes de pommes-de-terre, and Gateau de riz, and béchamel sauce, and Pruneaux de Tours, or all sorts of other grandiosities (for the girls had heard rumours of what would be found upon a Table d'Hôte, or of what could be ordered for a private dinner, and, naturally, were vague about it, as they were vague about everything outside Aunt Carly's and Miss Chester's); and really, what these Stanworth chits were doing was so overpoweringly amusing it was a great pity he was not there to see. The orchestra, at the very outset, was immensely droll. Mr Barker was the leader; all his boy-instrumentalists, from that school and others, were under him, with penny whistles, and penny flutes, and sixpenny drums, and sixpenny tambourines, and a bird-call, and two or three real fiddles, and a real piano, to keep it altogether, and give it body properly; and though it really was quite fine and pretty, it set everybody into peals of laughter. Look at the curtain too. The boys had painted it themselves, and in the centre was Cornubia, the classic name for Cornwall; and wreaths of *corn* were all round her, and *walls* were painted up, instead of a frame, all round the wreaths, and for fear people should not recognise the subject in spite of all these emblems, the boys had painted under the figure punningly, "Cornubia; she is *Mine*." As for the play, laughter having once begun with the overture, laughter ran right through it. It was not Blue Beard, as the girls had heard, a bit. All that had been a false rumour. (Had been Miss Information, as Bee whispered to Lee, and as Lee whispered to the next girl, and she to the next, and so on, till it had gone all along their line explodingly.) It was a *melée* (a May Lay, came out another of Bee's jokes), written for the occasion by Mr Stanworth himself; all about Spring and Summer, two naughty girls, who ran away from Autumn and Winter, their plump aunt and withered old uncle, leading them "dances" which brought all manner of diversion. They dressed up in each other's "things," Spring wearing roses for a minute or two, so as to pretend to be her sister, and get away from

Winter ; and Summer suddenly coming down with a light shower of snow (which was only torn paper) when Autumn, out of breath from chasing her, thought she could cry "Touch !" and it was time to pick her fruits, and scatter the seeds out of her flowers. "Come to the Spring," sang Summer ; and then sprang away further than her aunt could reach, asking if she could beat such a *spring* as that. "I will lead you to the *Summer*," sang Spring ; and then when Winter hobbled up, a "practicable" door was flapped open, showing a little boy, with slate and pencil, puzzling over his *sums*. "Does one swallow make a summer?" laughed Spring, when she darted from Winter's clutches, and a boy dressed up as a big bird wobbled on in her place.

"I am red, and well fed,
Betwixt Winter and Summer,"

was the refrain of a hilarious song sung by fat Aunt Autumn ; and when, at the last verse, little Spring jumped up, singing instead of it—

"If you said, Hit your head,
Here I come, cried the Drummer"—

and proceeded to drum on the large lady's large hat, as well as he could reach, it made the song be encored vociferously.

"Oh, the Wind, and the Wind, of the Wind-ter,"

quavered the poor old uncle, trying to wheel the old year out in a Bath chair ; when, of course, there was an imitation quaver from Spring and Summer, wheeling the new year in in a perambulator, with the two vehicles coming into collision, and Aunt Autumn not knowing which side to take in the general hubbub and confusion.

"Come, New Year,
Let April appear,
August, get quick to December ;
Sing a tune,
Dear July and June,
Making May March to November,"

was a duet-lullaby, sung by Spring and Summer, when they had rescued their perambulator, and thought the baby ought

to have some sleep to bring it into tranquillity. And when this was greeted with huge applause, there came this encore verse, with expressive action towards the Bath chair—

“ So, old year,
The months disappear,
Snow brings a cloak to December ;
Cease your tune,
Poor July and June,
Killed by the guns of September,”

bringing the curtain down with so many marks of favour, it had to be raised temporarily again, that the favour might have full swing, and not be unduly shortened.

And how could all this be conveyed to Ernest, with all the rest that made merriment at the time, and that, for the time, seemed worthy ?

“ It made us laugh immensely,” cried Beatrice in the morning, proceeding to make an effort at description ; but it all vanished in the glory of what Ernest proposed.

“ I want you to be ready directly,” he said. “ I am going to drive you over to Little Dene, because I think we owe it to Aunt Carly to let her see us together at the first possible opportunity ; and then I am coming back, and am going to have you to dine with me at the hotel.”

“ What ! and have Julienne soup perhaps, and Purée, and Mayonnaise, and Casseroles, and Fricondeau, and Brioches, and ever so many other things down in the cookery books ? ” Lee and Bee cried this, one putting one item, and one putting another item, just as they could recollect ; and they thought of many other glories, when they had obtained Miss Chester’s permission to get ready, and when they were really getting ready, and were on the road. But it is not necessary to record them all. It is sufficient to say that Aunt Carly seemed a glory even, in her softening, when the drive was over, and they had reached her.

“ It is true I never thought to see them as I see them now,” the old lady admitted. “ When they first landed, it seemed hopeless. No matter how severe I was, they always eluded me.”

“ And yet we didn’t mean to, Aunt Carly,” said Leonora.



"A lamp was lighted, half-low, and Ernest said he would go to the piano, and try and hammer out some of his old tunes."—Page 146.

"We meant to be good. Only, somehow, it seemed impossible."

The girls could not say much on this topic, softened as it all had become. They had always been so constrained with Aunt Carly, so afraid of offending her, so certain she would have no comprehension of their troubles, and their hungering, and their aspirations,—so certain she would have no comprehension of their little jokes and twirlabouts of fancy,—that they did not seem to get into the full enjoyment of Ernest again till Little Dene was out of sight, and they had him all to themselves on the Penzance road.

"Shall we see that old Mount many more times?" asked Leonora. "Shall we ever walk again on those flat Marazion sands? Shall we say good-bye to these old mine-shafts and blackberry hedges, and clumps of cabbages growing in the midst of the corn-fields?"

"And think what a glorious breaking-up it is!" was Beatrice's cry.

"And think what a glorious dinner it is!" was her cry again when dinner was going on at the hotel.

The greatest glory of all, however, was when dinner was over, and a lamp was lighted, half-low, and Ernest said he would go to the piano, and try and hammer out some of his old tunes.

"What! Can you play?" cried Beatrice.

"Why, Ernest dear, so you can! I had quite forgotten!" said Leonora. "How lucky to think there is a piano in the room! Let us hear all the things that you used to play to us at Golden Edge; it will seem like being there already!"

So, as Lee and Bee sat, one on each side, Ernest did what he could at what he called the hammering; and perhaps that one little half-hour of old music did as much as anything to build the little Jamaica romps up into nice young women. It seemed to speak of their home, and of their dead parents; and to go into their hearts and touch them.

CHAPTER XII.

GOOD-BYE TO ENGLAND.

If there had been fuss and flutter on the day of Ernest's arrival, there was another kind of fuss and flutter on the day of his departure. He was going to London alone, for he should get apartments for his sisters, he said. He should prefer that to spending all the time at a hotel; and Miss Chester having let his sisters go with him over night to Little Dene, for him to start from there, he and they now, breakfast being over, were to walk through Hayle, up to the railway station.

"That Penwood hasn't started with the luggage," was Aunt Carly's cry, standing under the well-known portico. "Here, Penwood! Penwood!"

But Penwood had started. There he was, having gone out at the back gate, to be seen the other side of the pond, wheeling the truck; and there, on the truck, was portmanteau, was hat-box, were railway-rug and umbrella, the whole. So that difficulty was surmounted.

To be succeeded by another.

"Leonora! You are not going out, surely, at this time in the morning, with only that little fichu!"

"Yes, Aunt Carly. I am used to it. And the air is quite warm."

"Beatrice! You have forgotten those pasties for your brother, now! Here, Rachel! Rebecca! Bring them. They are on the breakfast table!"

And there was something more. "You will squeeze those grapes, Leonora! They will not be fit for Ernest to eat! I wish he had let me put them in a basket!"

All had been hurried and flurried through, however. Miss Brydie had waved her hand from the gate; and the girls were tripping along beside their brother through the small sombre town. They knew every inch of it. There, was the road to the pier; that way, led to Lelant; that way, to St Erth; that way, to the ferry.

"We thought all this was so prodigiously big when we first came," said Leonora. "We thought we should never know our way about."

"And to think we can now walk up to this railway station," said Beatrice, "picking our steps through these old hoops and rails of rusty iron, which I am sure must have been lying here for half a century; and to think we shall be able to get back again, without Rachel or Rebecca to take care of us!"

"It is an immense undertaking, undoubtedly," said Ernest. "Shall we ever, I wonder, get through the other immensities we have before us?"

"Is it much, then?" for a significance in his manner brought out the question, breathlessly.

"London."

"Oh, yes, we know, London. You are going now to find a place for us there. But anywhere else?"

"Well, London means a good deal, in itself, to two untravelled girls," said Ernest. "It means Windsor, Richmond, Hampton Court, Mill Hill—for I shall take you to see my old school."

He had to leave them for a minute to get his ticket, but when he came back he went on with his enumeration.

"London means an opera, also," he said, "and some concerts, and a theatre, and the Crystal Palace, and the Tower, and museums. And then—"

"And what?" for he was seating himself in the carriage now, and fixing his small parcels and his rug; and the girls were impatient.

"Paris."

"Oh!"

"And down through Basle to Switzerland."

"Oh!"

And back again to London, by the Rhine, and Brussels, and Ostend."

"Oh!"

"For we will have a regular holiday whilst we are out about it; and it may be two months yet before we set sail."

Was not that splendid news to take back to Penzance by *the train* an hour later? Was not that a splendid prospect to

keep before the eyes during all the packing and leave-taking?

"I had some cousins once," said the guitar-girl, when Lee and Bee arrived, and she heard of it, "who went to the Hague."

"And an uncle of mine is consul at Florence," said another school-fellow.

"And my eldest brother," said a third, "is a travelling physician, who spends all his winters at Hyères."

"And the Suttons, our neighbours," said a fourth girl, "have a son at school at Frankfort; and they have just been over and met him at Antwerp, and been with him to Heidelberg and all sorts of places."

It was getting very near to the glory that was surrounding Leonora and Beatrice, of course; but still it was so many strides away from them, they were left as on an oasis, or a throne, that to the rest was unapproachable. Consequently, during all the packing of their boxes (when lessons were over), they were surrounded by deeply interested spectators.

"That old thing is not worth taking," cried Bee, kneeling over a big trunk, and snatching at something she had just laid in. "Oh, yes, I'll take it, though," she corrected herself. "I can wear it on the voyage."

"This old hat will do very well," decided Leonora, after pausing over it, "till we get something more stylish in Paris."

"I am shockingly off for best ruffles and collarettes," declared Beatrice, laying straight all that she had in a cardboard box. "Never mind," she added, "I will get Ernest to let me buy some more in Brussels."

"And we mustn't forget to lay in a stock of haberdashery in London," said Leonora. "Don't you think," she asked, in weighty consultation of the girls standing by, "that we shall find cottons, and braids, and needles, very useful?"

"And tapes," one of them suggested.

"To be sure. Yes; tapes as well. Anything else?"

"Buttons."

"And crewel; all sorts of colours. And sewing-machine silk, and some bodkins."

"Thanks, yes, of course. Oh dear me, my poor head."

I shall never be able to think of everything ! I'll tell you what ; would you mind taking paper and pencil, and just making us a little list ? ”

The school-fellow did not mind, in the least. She did it gladly. Every one would have done anything, gladly. Envy, jealousy—was out of their thought. Leonora's and Beatrice's grandeur was their grandeur—on a certain scale ; and when once they had got over that “ *so, so, so* ” business, which Beatrice had mimicked, and which, as she rightly said, meant nothing at all, they were in this position :—They were not going to Paris, and Brussels, and finally Jamaica, themselves ; but two of their school-fellows were going to Paris and Brussels, and finally Jamaica ; and that was something.

“ You will write, will you not ? ” one asked, elevating her eyebrows, and letting fall a tear, and getting sentimental.

Write ? Of course. And by every mail. And write to every one. Two or three pages in Leonora's pocket-book were devoted at once to addresses ; the address of one girl, a Welsh one, taking up a whole page, and even threatening to run over on to the next.

“ How do you spell it ? ” Leonora asked. “ I know I have heard it ; but I really forget ? ”

“ Double l, a, n, d, a, n, w, g ; Llandanwg. M, o, c, h, r, e, s ; Mochres. Double l, a, n, b, e, d, r ; Llanbedr. A, r, d, u, d, w, y ; Ardudwy. Merionethshire.” The girl said it, making it as difficult as she could, on purpose ; seeing Bee's eyes beginning to twinkle, and liking a laugh much better than a cry.

“ For,” added Leonora, “ why you should spell d, u, d, which is *dud*, and you should call it *did*, I cannot conceive ! And how you can make out that w, y, sounds *oo-ey*, I can't conceive either ! ”

“ Shall I explain ? ” asked the merry Welsh girl.

“ Oh, dear no, thank you ! No Celtic philology, we're much obliged ! ”

“ Absurd ! ” came as a chorus.

And then a new idea was started. Would not Leonora and Beatrice leave locks of their hair ? To run to one another's rooms, when the combing-gowns were on, at night, and all the hair-pins had been taken out, was the best answer to that.

"Here are the scissors," said Leonora. "Cut where you like, so that you take care it doesn't show."

"Yes, so that it doesn't show," echoed Beatrice. When little bits of hair were snipped off from everybody's heads, complimentarily; and much taste was displayed in tying these snippings up, with blue riband, some,—with amber silk, some,—with scarlet crewel, with gold thread, with silver thread; and in folding them up in papers, for careful keeping.

After which, except the absolute start; there only remained the farewell feast. Miss Chester was present at this; the governesses were present; plates, containing ample cuttings and helpings of everything, were despatched to the servants down-stairs; everybody's resources were taxed to the utmost to make the amusements extra brilliant and delightful.

"Let us have Dumb Crambo! Hands up, who like it!"

Carried, unanimously. And to begin, two girls went out; whilst Miss Chester, and Lee, and Bee, and the others consulted.

"You may come in to hear the word," cried Beatrice to those outside, in a moment, she being elected into being spokeswoman. "It rhymes to *lip*."

A short space of time for conferring; and then the guessing-girls, keeping to their dumbness, blew their hands to show how piercingly cold it was, hit their arms upon their chests to warm them, began to skate and slide on imaginary ice, and then one, using too much vehemence, fell.

"No! It's not *slip*!" cried Beatrice. "Out again!"

The girls went out, and the girls returned; with one pretending to be a very rebellious horse, and the other acting as coachman, jerking the reins, and raising her right arm to give a powerful—

"*Whip*!" was Beatrice's cry. "No! It's not *whip*! Begone!"

The girls came back next time arm in arm, smiling; holding up their skirts, affectedly; holding out imaginary parasols, affectedly; seating themselves on the floor, for sands; opening a basket to feed on an imaginary lunch.

"You mean a *trip*?" Beatrice quickly put it. "No! It's not a *trip*. And as you have tried three times, and have

failed, we must tell you. It's a ship. Our ship. And Lee and I will go out now, instead of you."

"The word rhymes to *ream*," Miss Chester said to them, when they had come in, for the information.

They dare not speak, by the rules, or else Bee would have run over with Beam, Bream, Seam, Scheme, Cream, Team, and others, in an instant, from pure high spirits and roguery. They were compelled to put the word they supposed had been chosen into action; and so, very quickly, Leonora laid herself back in a chair, closing her eyes for sleep; Beatrice trod about officiously softly, so as not to wake her; Beatrice feigned to go to sleep also (giving a wicked snore, to make the others laugh!) and then Leonora woke with a tragic start; she had had a—

"*Dream!* No!" said Miss Chester. "Again, my girls. Again."

They ran out, and came back, and seated themselves with mighty (supposed) difficulty, in a boat; they seized each a pair of oars; they pushed the boat off; they rowed, and rowed, having to wipe their faces, having to sweep back their hair, having to row on and on again, with increasing tug and energy.

"Rowing against the *stream?*" said Miss Chester. "No. Not right. Go out once more."

They returned to bathe. They took off two or three bracelets and locket, to simulate undressing; they bound up their hair; Bee took the attitude of diving from a chair; she did dive, and getting out of her depth, was holding her hands up to be saved, whilst Leonora stood on the bank, uttering a piercing—

"*Scream?* No," and Miss Chester shook her head. "But you clap your hands?" she added. "You want to speak? Speak, then, we give you leave."

"Your word is *steam*," said Leonora. "We knew it all the while. After the ship,—our ship,—the *steam*. Only we liked the game of going through the other things."

"Then we will give you another turn," said Miss Chester, assuming a royal manner, to fit. "We will favour you, since *it is the last time* you will be with us. Leave us, for our consultation."

"You have to find a rhyme to *Wake her*," she announced, when they had returned.

A flash of eyes passed between Lee and Bee. They knew what was meant, by intuition. But for mere enjoyment, as before, they proceeded. One pretended to bring a basket of bread to a kitchen-door, whilst the other, a cook, received so many loaves, and counted them. It was a *Baker*; and wrong, of course. For the next, they both caught up sheets of music, holding them on their heads for bonnet-pokes, and both cast up their eyes, and folded their hands, and looked very saintly and demure. It was a *Quaker*, as knowingly wrong as before. (Masculine, instead of feminine, they said afterwards, when it was all submitted to laughing criticism.) And then in flagrant disobedience of all rules, Bee exclaimed, "We shan't do *Acre*, and we shan't do *Breaker*, and we shan't do *Shaker* or *Wise acre*, as we might, for we know your word is *Jamaica*, and our *steam ship* takes us there, and it's very nicely thought of!"

"Come," said Miss Chester, in the midst of the amusement, "let us have a French word now, to finish with. And Leonora and Beatrice shall look on, this time, whilst two of the others go out."

It was soon settled which two should go; and it was soon settled what they were to rhyme.

"Entrez," said Leonora, calling them in. "Et écoutez. Le mot choisi se rime avec *Chez*."

The girls looked puzzled. Presently, however, one pretended to sew, and held out the middle finger of her right hand, for the other to fit it with a thimble.

"Un *dé*!" cried Leonora. "Non!"

They tried some soldiering; with swords and guns very active and deadly; and then the two smiling, and shaking hands.

"La *paix*? Peace?" said Leonora. "No."

They tried a cow; and a milkmaid, coquettishly sitting on an imaginary stool.

"Du *lait*? Non, non, mes amies. Pas du tout."

They were allowed more guesses, since the word was French, and brought more difficulty; and they pretended to pick buttercups in a meadow, un *pré*; to unlock a rusty door

with a key, un *clé*; to be Robin Hoods and let off an arrow, un *trait*; but had to be told eventually the word was Fairy, une *fée*, and that their chance was over.

"Will it not do?" said Miss Chester. "Shall we not bid each other good night, now?"

"After one more!" the girls pleaded. "One more French one, and then we shall be content!"

"Find a rhyme to *Nous*, then," said Miss Chester, "and then that will make *Chez nous*, for the girls' home in *Jamaica*, to which they are sailing on the *steam ship*, and we shall have made the round perfect."

The girls whose turn it was, became afflicted at once with a distressing cough, un *toux*, requiring patting on the back, and much administration of restorative. No. One stuck a sugar-loaf cap upon the other, who stood on a chair, lolling her tongue out, vacant, submitting to be jeered at as a fool, un *fou*. No. One made wry faces at the other, for a grimace, une *moue*. No. Both wheeled wheels about frantically, coming into collision, and getting overturned, for des *roues*. No. Both were taking a very languid walk, when one went comically into a hole, un *trou*. No. Both picked up their flounces, and trod about daintily, to get out of the mud, la *boue*. No. It was *Chou*, Miss Chester said; a cabbage; and there was some little appropriateness in it, the girls were to remember; since the French used the term idiomatically, *Allez planter des Choux*, Go, to plant cabbages, meaning, Retire to your country-seat; and as the Casserly girls were going to retire to Golden Edge, which was a country-seat indeed, on such an occasion the little illusion might very fairly pass.

"And indeed," said Leonora, as all were separating to go to their rooms, "we should like to send a hamper, with things for another feast, from Southampton, the very last thing before starting, supposing school has then recommenced. We should like, you, to have a real hail of black-currant lozenges, your favourites. We should like, you, to have a square yard of alecompane, — you never seem to have enough of it. We should like, you, to have sticks upon sticks of liquorice; and, you, to have whole canisters of aniseed and barley-sugar, for

your poor cough; and you,—why, you seem to nibble at orange-peel, for a *bonne-bouche*, more than at anything else, so you shall have a heap of it; and you, with that horrible habit you have of tasting slate-pencil powder, shall have a packet of it, done up like a pound of sugar! For you must not think," went on Leonora, turning from a tearful laugh into a laughing cry, "that we shall ever, ever, ever forget you! It isn't likely!"

Similar proofs of an affectionate nature, and of touched hearts, came from Leonora and Beatrice both, when, on the next day, they were standing for the last time at Little Dene.

"Bee," said Leonora, "we will go up to Lady Con."

They went, slowly; and the longest way, to make the leave-taking slower still. "Good-bye," said one. "Good-bye," said the other; their voices lingering, their eyes lingering; as they looked at the little windows they had decorated; at the seat fixed round the octagonal walls; as they just laid two or three ivy-leaves on the centre-table for a last deposit, and turned away.

"We must pay a special visit to—to the dining-room chimney-glass!" said Lee, with some pain, and consciously.

It was not the absolute identical glass, of course; it was the one which had replaced the other, fitted to the same frame. But they went; and they looked; and Bee took hold of Lee's hand, meaning what words would not have meant half so tenderly, as the whole scene was recalled.

"And now Lily's and Jet's graves," said Bee, to get rid of too much sadness; and they went again to the garden; for those comfortable cats had both been buried there, and had both been almost forgotten, in the interest of the gambols of their successors.

"And the cock that crowed 'Marg the Mite Maroon'! At least," said Bee, "the cock that has come after the cock that crowed Marg the Mite Maroon; for I suppose this one is about, in proper historical succession, King Cockalorum the Thirteenth! Your devoirs to that reigning monarch, please. So come."

Devoirs also to Penwood the gardener; with a contribution ("not an imposition, you know," said Bee to Lee, "or a tax,

like scrutage, poundage, usage, or any of those others ; but an offering of fealty, a benevolence,") of a brand-new pruning-knife, and one or two other trifles, for which he had expressed a liking.

"I shayn't travel a way down to Plymouth to fetch un any maw-er," said Penwood, in his Cornwall manner.

"No, Penwood, no," said the girls. "And there'll be none of your monster pee-ars for us any more ; and none of your ripe green figs down there on the south wall. It's 'arle oop,' as you say, poor old Penwood !"

In the kitchen, with Rachel and Rebecca, amongst the good handsome gifts which were heaped upon them, and the long chat, part playful, part confidential, there was quite a scene. A hearty hug, a hearty kiss, had to end it ; and then—there was Aunt Carly.

"Poor, poor, Aunt Carly !" said Lee and Bee when they were in the railway-carriage on their way off ; and what they said of this sort of their parting with their aunt, when that parting was past and done, forms the best description of it. "Poor, stern, and rigid dear old soul ! I am sure she is sorry there is such a British colony as Jamaica, and that she would like us to live just the other side of Little Dene walls, so that she might have us when she grows really old and lonesome !"

"And Lee," said Beatrice, speaking as Beatrice was accustomed, "I should be so happy if I could just take her and unmake her ! I should roll all the soft part of her outwards, and then I could love her dearly ! But now, the soft part of her is so very, very far in, and the hard hides it so completely, you can only get at it so seldom, it is as bad as not getting at it at all !"

There was the shake of the railway-carriage going on, though ; there was the rattle, the rumble, the dash, the plunge, the sudden stop ; there was the swing over high-up bridges, bridging over steep and narrow valleys, by Truro, Grampound, St Austle, Bodmin, St Germain's, Liskeard ; and the girls could not let melancholy, pining, or any sorrow, stop with them, in the midst of all their gaiety and enjoyment. *Here was Saltash, with its splendid sweep of smooth white*

water, its old hulks of men-of-war, its superb stretch of sky and hill. Here was Plymouth, with its dark, low, dull station, full of amalgamated hiss and bustle, and "By your leave," and push. Here were all the other incidents of that magic or fairy journey; and here was the air getting thicker, and the sun dying out, and houses standing straight-eyed and interminable in the place of wide-boughed trees; and this was Paddington, and the train had stopped, and there was Ernest waiting to hand his sisters out; and if every heart in London could have beaten as high as Lee's and Bee's were beating, London would have been the happiest city in the world.

"Are we to do precisely what we like?" asked Leonora, when they and their luggage had been set down at the lodgings in one of the nice terraces near by. "Are we to be mistresses? And to order anything we choose?"

"Yes," said Ernest. "It is holiday now, with nothing to contradict you. Make your *début*. Begin."

It almost frightened the girls, it was so delicious.

"And are we to make tea?"

"And are we to ring the bell?"

"And when the landlady comes, are we to tell her what we like, and then let her get it?"

"Oh, but I couldn't!" Bee declared. "Yes, I could, though!" she declared, equally as firmly, the next moment. "I shall tell the good thing to get me a basin of bread and milk! That's what I am always longing for!"

"And I," said Leonora, "will order almonds and raisins. And not just two or three almonds on the dish, just enough to provoke one, but as many of the one as of the other."

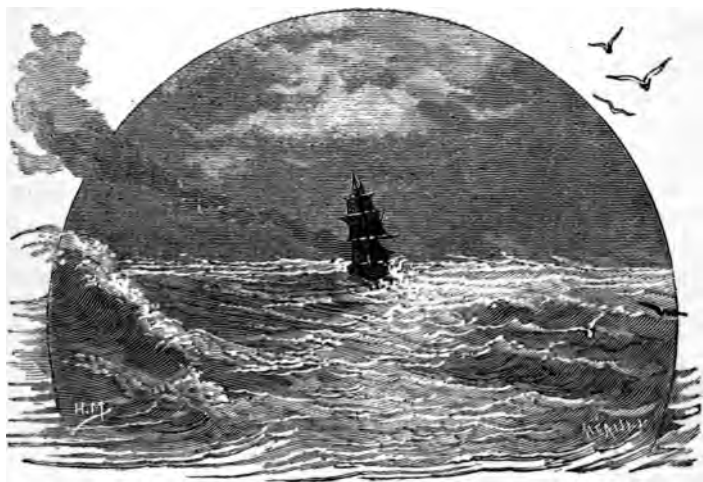
But, as Leonora managed to gather a little dignity about her when, a few minutes afterwards, she really had to give some orders, and as Beatrice only had to bury her head in the sofa-cushions to hide her amusement once on that first occasion, and never had to do it afterwards, there will be no more put down concerning this magnificent treat the girls' brother was giving them, or concerning what they saw, or where he took them. The treat lasted so long, the treat covered so much, that if all were recorded of it worth recording, it would fill (in Lee's and Bee's way of

delineation) Vols. ever so many, Cols. ever so many, Chaps. ever so many, Haps and Mishaps ever so many, with pp. which could not be counted; and there is no room for it. It began, it went on, it ended; which short choppy statements must suffice; and then there can be only one more look at the three Casserlys, only one more listen to their happy talk, and they must retreat behind a curtain, or a curtain must be let down to conceal them, whichever method is preferred.

They have trodden off English ground, their ship is beating and plunging and being blown out of English waters, and they are looking back for their last look at the English line of land.

Leonora gives a sigh. "All the other passengers," she says, "had friends come down with them, in the train, and to the docks, and in the boats, right up to the ship. There is nobody over there, who has been distressed by doing as much for us as that!"

"No," says Beatrice, seeing there is a cheerful side to this as well as the side that makes her sister sigh, "luckily we don't make anybody unhappy by going away. Nobody looked to catch the last sight of us, nobody or nothing is looking even now. Oh yes, there is!" she added, brightly. "Look up there, and right far off, a long way in the sky, you will see three thin little birds! Thank you, little feathered friends! Fly with us as far you can! I don't like saying good-bye, even to you!"



“Their ship is beating, and plunging, and being blown out of English waters.”—Page 158.



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